



던전 디펜스

02

DUNGEON DEFENSE

아침마다 새벽 · COOPING 엘리트





CONTENTS

서문	...005쪽
제1화: 참 좋은 친구들	...021쪽
제2화: 원숭이 사냥의 윤리학	...083쪽
제3화: 비인간찬가(非人間讃歌)	...175쪽
제4화: 바로크적 진실게임	...283쪽
막간	...331쪽





NECROPHILIAC

OUTCAST

FALSE PROPHET

PSYCHOPATH

MEGALOMANIAC

—Malevolence,

And to scorn?

—Hostility,



Dungeon Defense (던전 디펜스) - Volume 02 by Yoo Heonhwa (유현화).

Published by Novel Engine (영상출판미디어) in 2016.

Illustrations by [cocorip](#)

Translated by [Shalvation](#)

Edited by Rando & itachuu

eBook & typesetting by [Olivki](#)

Cleaning by sushiaddict Scans by ampzz

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

—**L**ook at this person.

The slaughter of the Demon Lord driven by power is taking place.

「I am your answer.」

Demon Lord Dantalian has gained a tremendous wealth due to the Black Death.

Inversely, the humans are leading an army to steal the source of his wealth.

As danger approaches closer by the hour, Dantalian remembers the individual that was to become ‘the greatest commander in the world’. The 16-year-old girl who was fated to become a slave—the esteemed daughter of a high noble family that had all perished, Laura De Farnese.

The Demon Lord’s vassals were starting to gather.

A philosopher may ask great questions,
but politicians give great answers.
I am all of your answers.

Prologue

Overcome your past.

People would say this easily.

If I were to give a piece of advice to these optimistic people, then it would be that there were a lot of past experiences in the world that could not be overcome.

What if your own mother was human trash?

That was fine. You could manage that.

Or if your own father was a guy like trash?

You could be patient up to that as well.

But, if you were to watch your younger half-siblings tremble in fear because your own mother had slapped them, solely for the reason that they were from another mother, and your father watched idly from the side while not uttering a single word—then at that point, you could only modestly accept the truth.

That your life was shoved into dog shit.

I had vaguely assumed that my life had reached this position when I was 10 years old.

My younger half-siblings were clinging onto each other and crying. The reason was simple. My mother had cursed at them by shouting, “You dirty children of a whore!”. Of course, at that time I didn’t know what the word ‘whore’ meant. The day I discovered that the existence of a penis could be used for something other than peeing was when I was 11, thus meaning, I needed to wait 1 more year before I stepped into the world of obscenity.

I’m serious.

Even I had a time when I was pure.

Back to the story.

There was no way a 6 and 5 year-old could comprehend the word ‘whore’, when a 10-year-old couldn’t either. Except, it was obvious that the words were said with an offensive nuance. How could I tell? That was because when my mother had called them whores.

“Oh my. So you two are the children of a whore.”

She did not speak pleasantly like this, but.

“These mongrel-like whore’s children. How dare you not know your place and—!”

Instead she had exploded her anger out savagely.

Even children knew when they were not welcomed.

Regardless of being able to understand the words or not, you at least knew when the adult in front of you was trying to kill you or help you. It was especially noticeable when the adult had intensely slapped your face at the part of saying “children of a whore”.

Thus, the moment my younger half-siblings started trembling their shoulders.

The moment my younger siblings, who were laughing happily just a second ago, had muffled their crying because they were sincerely afraid that **they were going to be killed**,

I had the gut feeling that if I did not fix this shitty situation, then my life too would become shit.

“Father. Throw out my mother.”

“What?”

“Don’t needlessly ask back. You heard everything. Have a divorce

with my mother.”

My father blinked.

Even his blinking felt like an excuse which further raised my annoyance towards him.

“.....What are you saying?”

“So you’re going to keep backing out? That’s fine, I’ll use this opportunity to clearly say this now. My mother is insane. My little sisters had merely broken a ceramic cup by mistake, but do you know what my mother did?”

I slapped my own face. Hard.

Because I thought that I should show him a demonstration.

“She slapped them. Hard enough to make my siblings fall to the floor. Up to here you can still overlook her as a normal hysterical patient, but what she did next was the real problem. My mother went to get a kitchen knife and shoved it near my siblings’ faces.

“.....”

“Do you understand? A kitchen knife. She showed a knife to my 5-year-old little sister. My mother is not a hysteria patient. She’s a through and through insane person. Divorce my mother immediately and kick her out of our home.”

“Son. She is still your mother.”

“I am fully aware.”

I spoke coldly.

“That’s why I’m urging you to divorce her even more. Before I further scorn the father who claimed to love that woman and made her his wife.”

“.....”

“Father. You read to me quotes from Rousseau yesterday. That the difference between man and beasts was that they bore a will. You read this to me in a soft, a very soft tone. And today, I’ve discovered a beast within my mother’s face.”

“Certainly, it was effective giving you a teacher on rhetorics. Seeing that you’re a lot more eloquent than I was at your age.”

“I already realized that I was a genius when I was 6-years-old. You aren’t going to make me realize it again by complimenting me now.”

“Did you hear it as a compliment? I was scoffing.”

“Ha. You’re the one who needs to listen to the rhetorical classes, father. You don’t even know how to properly scoff at your own son and you think you’ll be able to hold onto your wife? Please do better at looking after yourself.”

“I will say it again. She’s your mother.”

My father’s voice became cold.

“For 10 months, she went through all kinds of pain holding you inside of her stomach before giving birth to you. The very first person to smile when you came to this world was your mother, the first person to cry for you when you got hurt for the first time was also your mother. Son. Know your place. How dare you say such immoral words like kicking out your own mother.”

I snickered.

“How shameless.”

“What?”

“This is not my problem. This your problem, father. Because of a single mother, 6 of your children are being abused. It’s simple math.

Will you save 1, or save the other 6. Throw away irritating words like immoral. There are no humans as ethically trash as you, father. None.”

“.....”

“This will be the last time that I will request something from you regarding this topic, father. For good. So give me a serious response. Will you divorce my mother?”

My father went silent.

He stayed silent for over 40 minutes.

The reason why I remembered the time exactly was because I had glared at the wristwatch my father had on. It was around the time 11am was crossing over to 12 in the afternoon.

“I can’t.”

Damn 12 in the afternoon.

Since that moment, I despised this time permanently. My habit of refusing to wake up in the morning originated from here too. I will be saying this again but. I utterly despised the morning and noon.

“.....Why not?”

“Because I love your mother.”

“That is a really, immensely, disappointing answer. Then does that mean you do not love your children, father? Do you not care if your wife were to kill all of your children?”

“Yes.”

And thus I could never forget this moment.

Like a sculptor using a hammer and nail to engrave a mark on my brain.

A type of trauma was embedded.

“I love your mother that much.”

“.....”

“I’m sorry, son.”

“.....Just now, father.”

I gulped.

It might not have only been saliva that I had swallowed down.

“Father, you had just now lost all of my trust.”

“I know.”

“Father, you had just now ruined my life.”

“I know that as well.”

My father nodded.

“No matter what you choose, you will live a life more harsh than I.”

This damn father.

I truly detested you.

“.....Let me ask one last thing. If this was a normal question..... You would obviously sacrifice 1 person for 6. That’s the kind of person you are, father. But, because of the thing so-called love, are you telling me that you’re choosing to select 1 over the 6?”

“That’s right.”

“If that love of yours, father, is only making you weak, then what is the point of love?”

My father did not answer.

It was because he could not answer.

I bit my lips and cursed.

“I feel ashamed to look at my own weak father. Do you understand? I am ashamed to death. In the end you could not choose anything, father. You really are that, that damn indecisive.”

At that time ‘damn’ was the highest level of curse that I knew.

I did not know how to use curses that were more terrible than that.

Did I not say so already?

Even I had a time when I was pure.

“Son.”

“Do not apologize. I’m not being upset at you in order to receive an apology. What could possibly change if you apologized. Just know this.”

I vowed.

A cold vow.

A clear vow.

“I will not become weak like you, father.”

“.....”

“Ever.”

And.

And.....



□ Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 20
Niflheim, Hermes' Plaza

Slap!

In truth, it was a jaunty sound.

The sound of skin and skin colliding echoed loudly.

People must have been alarmed by the sudden powerful shockwave because they had their mouths held agape. Approximately 200 demons of various races were looking this way. In this situation, 'this way' very simply referred to two people.

Me.

And Lapis Lazuli.

"This one is disappointed."

"....."

"To think that your highness was only a person of this degree."

With an absolutely emotionless face.

But with an even colder tone, she spoke.

"If it was your highness, this one had thought that your highness would be different from the other Demon Lords. This one had hoped that your highness would display something different compared to the other people intoxicated by authority. But all this one can see before her is an incredibly fattened swine."

I carefully felt my cheek.

It hurt.

My skin was red and swollen.

Was it not impressive?

“.....Lapis Lazuli. While you are my mistress and fiancée, you are at the same time also my vassal. Midday, while in the center of the plaza, in front of hundreds of citizens, you have raised your hand at your lord. You know how much of a disloyal act this is, right?”

“Yes. This one knows.”

“Good.”

I nodded.

Be it an outcast or a half-breed, for someone like that to dare hit an inviolable Demon Lord. This alone was enough to reach top news of the year. Even the people in the plaza were looking at this with an astonished gaze.

But it was not over yet. Let me make it more enjoyable.

I decreed.

“I, Dantalian, hereby relieve you of your duties.”

“.....”

“Do not appear before me again.”

On that day, a shocking news spread throughout the city.

The couple that had become the most famous in the demon world for having overcome social statuses had broken apart in 2 months.

If this wasn't a splendid occasion, then I didn't know what it was.

Chapter One

Quite Good Friends

☐ Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 20
Niflheim, Hermes' Plaza

“I heard everything. You had a big fight with your succubus lover, right?”

“Rumors really do spread fast.”

“I’m a girl who’s a bit sensitive to trends.”

Barbatos had come to visit me at my lodging.

For some reason this distinguished Demon Lord, who was ranked 8th, had become fairly fond of me. She probably had a good impression towards me because of the incident where I had knocked Paimon off her pedestal. Well, that wasn’t the only reason.

“Go ahead and let it all out. Why did you two fight?”

“Do you not see me applying ice still? It has only been 20 minutes since I was slapped by Lapis. Honestly, I don’t want to talk to anyone right now.”

“Oh, this poor male.”

Barbatos smiled slyly.

It was a bit annoying.

“Think carefully. Your lover is a half-breed succubus. She is an outcast who would normally get executed for merely touching a Demon Lord. If a child like that were to hit you, then she was doing so while literally putting her life on the line. What kind of misdeed could you have done to make her risk such a thing?”

“So are you saying that this is all my fault?”

“Yup. Throughout my entire life, whenever a problem occurs, males have always seemed to have a higher chance of being at fault than females.”

“You must be quite pleased to have been born as a female.”

Barbatos laughed.

Normally, we would not be in the position to be exchanging informal words so frankly.

Barbatos was the rank 8th Demon Lord. She had a standing army of 6,000 men and a countless number of followers under her command. She even led a huge political group known as the Plains Faction.

On the other hand, I was the rank 71st Demon Lord. Not only did I have no followers, but I was also not part of a proper faction either. I may have been overflowing with money, but that was all. Compared to Barbatos I was a mere fly.

Despite that, it felt like Barbatos vaguely wanted me to be her friend. What was I supposed to do when the other party wanted an easy-going style of speech from me first? I'll more than gladly humor her.

“Dantalian. We may not be friends yet, but I believe that we have reached something similar to being friends.”

“That is quite the honor.”

“I'm being serious.”

Barbatos grinned.

That expression of hers was the reason why even if she told me that she was being serious, I felt no credibility from it.

“Most of the Demons Lords are a bunch of trash. None of them are promising. Yet, you’re the first rookie in 60 years to appear to be talented. I just wanted to treat you nicely as your senior in this business industry.”

A senior, huh.

Barbatos led the group known as the ‘Plains Faction’. This faction gained its name due to the fact that most of the Demon Lords who were in this group had castles that were located on the plains. As a result of residing in an open area, encounters with humans were frequent.

Thus, Barbatos naturally became a Demon Lord hostile towards humans. If the Demon Lord armies were to ever invade the human world, then Barbatos would, with no doubt, be the one to lead them. She had spread an information network across the human world and was constantly on watch as she prepared for a massive war.

On the other hand, Paimon, the Demon Lord that I had crushed, was known as the head of the ‘Mountain Faction’. As the name literally suggests, this faction consisted mostly of Demon Lords with castles located on the rugged mountain region, where they seldom met with humans face to face.

The Plains Faction and the Mountain Faction were locked in a rivalry.

Would the Aggressive Faction and the Moderate Faction be more appropriate?

So when Barbatos had called herself a ‘senior’ and myself a ‘rookie’, she was indirectly trying to lure me into her own faction. It was a statement with a plot in mind.

I gave a subtle glance at Barbatos.



“What’s your point.”

“If you’re trying to break up with that succubus lover of yours, then I can help. In the first place, it doesn’t make sense for an outcast to be having sex with a Demon Lord. It’s not too late yet, so ask for my help.”

“.....”

We gazed at each other for a moment.

“Are you telling me to break up with Lapis?”

“Why? Are you embarrassed? Don’t worry about it. As much as people get quickly excited here, that excitement also goes away just as fast. Give it a year and people will have long forgotten that you ever fornicated with an outcast.”

Barbatos had spoken as if it was nothing of real importance.

I narrowed my brows.

“You’re not the one who gets to decide what happens between myself and Lapis, I am. Don’t get too deeply involved with someone else’s love life.”

“Usually, I’m not this nosy. But you’re not a normal kid. You’re the big rookie that was able to get a blow on Paimon. As a senior Demon Lord, I have the obligation to show some concern for my junior’s reputation.”

Barbatos crossed her legs.

Pure white thighs and calves entered my vision.

“Of course, it won’t be easy breaking up with the lover that you showed so much affection for. I understand. But people grow stronger each time they lose their love, kid.”

“.....”

“The only significance love has is that it reveals your weakness. People don’t grow stronger through experiencing or giving love, they grow stronger after throwing it away.”

“Hou.”

I twisted the edges of my mouth.

“Is that **really how it is?**”

“Sure it is. Trust me. Despite my appearance, I’ve lived for 500 years already. The amount of lovers I’ve had a relationship with up till now is over 1,000. If you listen to my love advice then beautiful women will give you fellatio even if you’re just lying down.”

Barbatos smiled.

It was a smile that was as sly as an alley cat.

“Anyways, just tell me what led up to this split up. Let everything out and allow your mind to feel at ease. If you let it all out then you should feel lighter.”

I stayed silent for a while.

What happened to make Lapis Lazuli slap me.

The situation behind this was much too large. It contained a story that was so complexly twisted together that I had no idea where to start.

I opened my mouth slowly.

“Half a month ago an old woman visited.”

“Hmm.”

“At first, I thought she was just some beggar. Her appearance was

pitiable and dirty, after all. But I soon found out that she wasn't a mere bum. The old woman was.....”

I closed my eyes for a second.

I could remember the entire scene distinctively.

“That old woman was Lapis’ mother.”

□ Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 3
Niflheim, Governor's Palace

“I see. So you're Lala's birth mother. What has brought you here?”

“Yes, oh great lord. This humble one has heard news of her daughter, whom this one has been roaming many years in search of. Despite having to risk discourtesy, this one had turned her path here, to your highness.”

An incredibly wrinkled old woman spoke.

I personally poured the old lady a cup of tea. She insisted that it was too much of an honor and tried to refuse many times, but despite my appearance, I put respecting the elderly foremost. Additionally, if this person was Lapis Lazuli's mother then the game was over. Would that not make her my mother-in-law?

“Please do not make my kindness go to waste.”

“T-Thank you very much.”

The old lady, as if there was no other choice, carefully received the first glass of tea. Despite her actions, it didn't feel like she truly disliked it.

“You said you have been roaming around in search of Lala, correct?”

“Yes, your highness.”

“To my knowledge, Lala became an orphan at a very young age. When she had gained her senses, her parents were already gone. This may be rude of me to say, but I thought that you had thrown Lala away and ran off on your own.....”

“Oh no. That is not correct.”

The old lady had begun to shed tears.

“This humble woman was banished from her village as soon as she had given birth to that child. The mayor had chased this one away. A succubus who had made a matrimonial contract with a mere human could not possibly be accepted as a part of the village. That was our village’s rule.”

I listened to this old woman’s life story without a word.

“This one had given birth to the child on a cold winter day. This humble one’s consciousness was still coming to and fro and yet the mayor had suddenly ordered this one to leave. This humble one pleaded stubbornly for more time..... for a week or at least for one more day. But it was to no avail. This lowly one was expelled from the village without having been able to breastfeed her own child once.”

The old woman lowered her tea-cup and got on her knees.

She crawled to me and grasped my left hand.

“Oh great lord. The only thing this woman of humble birth had left behind for that child is her name, Lapis Lazuli. Her father had the same lapis colored eyes, and thus this one had named her so. That child is most certainly this humble woman’s daughter. Please, if this one could see her daughter’s face..... see if her daughter is doing well..... that is this woman of humble birth’s only wish.”

This old lady’s plea most certainly touched my heart.

A succubus who bore a child because of her affection towards a human.

By nature, marriage between a demon and a human was prohibited. This old lady, for having violated such a taboo, was exiled and had lost her daughter. For a scar formed because of a single

summer night love, one could only see it as severe.

“I see. I shall arrange for you to meet Lapis.”

“I-Is that true!? Thank you. Thank you very much, your highness!”

“A mother is meeting her child. I’m merely granting something that is obvious. There is no reason for you to be thanking me.”

I called for Lapis Lazuli to enter the room.

Shortly after, Lapis Lazuli, wearing the same as usual tidy uniform, arrived. Lala had glanced at the old woman but it seems she was unable to recognize who the woman was.

“Did your highness call for this one?”

“Lala. My eternal lover and loyal subject.”

“.....Why is your highness behaving like that all of a sudden? Whenever your highness starts to imitate a weird way of speech, this one can’t help but feel a strange anxiety.”

“Examine this old woman here. Do you recognize her, perhaps?”

Lapis Lazuli narrowed her brows.

It was a face displaying that she had no idea.

“This one is sorry, but this individual is an utter stranger to this one.”

“Look more carefully. Do you truly not know?”

“This one is unable to guess what your highness is thinking.”

It was then that the old lady started to approach Lapis Lazuli.

While letting out a cry, the old lady hugged Lala.

“Aah.....! My child! This is certainly my child!”

Due to the sudden situation, Lapis Lazuli froze. Instead of appearing confused, she more looked as if she was unable to understand what was happening. It was that kind of feeling. Lala turned to look this way.

“Your highness. Please explain.”

“As you heard just now, that person is your birth mother. Of course, there are many things that must be confirmed first, but surely a person wouldn’t tell a lie while in the presence of a Demon Lord, when the truth could be revealed at any time.”

I felt somewhat proud.

An orphan was able to reunite with their parent. Even for myself, who always thought pessimistically, I couldn’t help but be touched by this reunion. I leisurely waited for the words ‘thank you’ to come out from Lapis Lazuli’s mouth.

But.

“.....”

Lapis Lazuli was strange.

A peculiar emotion had appeared in her eyes for an instant. It was truly a short moment. If one were to calculate the time, then it was as short as a blink. Lapis Lazuli’s face was indifferent—perhaps too indifferent.

Despite not knowing what exactly that emotion was.

It was certain that it wasn’t the type of expression a person should have made when meeting their own mother for the first time in decades.

I quickly made a decision.

“Lapis Lazuli.”

“Yes, your highness.”

“Kneel.”

Without asking any questions, Lapis Lazuli knelt down. I wonder if the old woman was confused by the sudden order I had given, but she was looking back and forth between Lapis and I with a bewildered gaze.

I approached Lazuli and swung my right hand. It wasn't a joke. I had properly put strength into my arm and slapped her. Lapis Lazuli, unable to withstand the force, fell onto the floor. As soon as this happened, the old woman let out a sharp scream.

“W-What is your highness! What is your highness doing!?”

“Be silent, you shallow-minded succubus. Say another word and I will slice off your tongue and shove it into your ear.”

I ignored the old woman's cry and grabbed Lapis Lazuli by the hair. I then lifted Lala's body up by force. Lapis Lazuli didn't let out a single sound and simply looked up at me with emotionless eyes.

“Confess. Did you dare to use dirty tricks?”

“.....This one has found out for the first time that your highness is a lot more violent than this one had originally thought.”

“You're quite good at shamelessly moving your trap like that. Did you become blinded just because you had gained my royal grace? I had allowed a mere peasant like you to stand by my side and now you want me to treat your parent as well? Speak. Am I your lord or your coin bag?”

I glanced slightly at the old woman and could see her lips trembling.

It seems she couldn't understand what was going on before her.

"Your mother did not come looking for you. You're the one who probably found your mother first. You and your mother planned this unamusing performance to ridicule me, am I right?"

"That's not possible..... great lord, it's a misunderstanding!"

The old lady shouted out as if she was screaming.

"This humble one has only met her daughter for the first time today! There was no occasion of this one and her daughter meeting beforehand and devising a plot against your highness. Please believe this one!"

"I know very well how crafty your daughter is. Always trying to fool me and stab me in the back whenever she gets the chance. This is the same. It wasn't enough that you alone were living in wealth, so you brought in your own mother. You disgraceful woman."

I slapped Lala's cheek once more.

Once, twice, thrice, I continued to hit her.

Each time the old lady screamed over and over again. But that was it. Once I had taken out a dagger the old woman hurriedly ran out of the room and escaped off to somewhere.

"....."

The reception room was silent.

Lapis Lazuli stood up and silently dusted her skirt. Lala's face was still expressionless, and it seems she didn't feel any particular pain from her swollen red cheek.

".....Damn it."

Thud

I stabbed the blade into the table.

“It was a lie. Your mother ridiculed us with her lie, Lala! She didn’t come looking for you because she was worried, she probably planned to simply latch onto you like some parasite.”

“That is most likely correct.”

Lapis Lazuli spoke calmly.

“This one has been officially approved as your highness Dantalian’s mistress. Adding to that, your highness has also joined the ranks of the wealthiest people on the continent. This one’s mother had mostly likely approached your highness and this one aiming for our wealth.”

“To run away by herself when her own daughter was being beaten.....!”

It was a simple but extreme test.

To confirm what the old woman’s true intentions were.

If that old woman had truly wandered for 40 years in search for her child, then there was no chance that she would stand by idly and allow the violence to happen. She would have tried to stop me even if she had to risk her own life.

However, that old hag had ran away much too easily. What did this mean? It meant that that old woman, as a mother, did not love or treasure Lapis Lazuli.

The likelihood of her visit here was ten to one for money. She most likely crawled her way here to lean on her daughter and live a life of luxury. My heart became pitch-black with rage.

“For the person who had irresponsibly copulated with a man, irresponsibly had a child, and irresponsibly ran away from the village by herself— to try and come back and act as a mother now! How barefaced could someone be after abandoning their child for 40

years!”

“Your highness.”

“I’ll kill her!”

I shouted.

“I’ll cut off her tongue, break her limbs, and throw her in a pig sty. It’s only appropriate for that kind of mongrel to receive divine punishment. If the Gods are neglecting their duty then there’s no choice but for me to punish her in their stead!”

“Your highness.”

Lapis Lazuli looked straight at me.

“Compose yourself. There is no reason for your highness to dirty your hands.”

“No, there is more than enough reason, Lala. You are my lover. Be it a false cover or not you are still my fiancée. The ridicule you receive thus becomes my humiliation. The ridicule I receive thus becomes your humiliation. How could there possibly be no value!?”

“.....”

“Don’t worry. How could I possibly tell you to kill your own mother. Just wait patiently. I’ll take care of it discretely. I’ll make sure to not allow that kind of trash from ever intervening with your life ever again. First bribe the guards and.....”

Slap

I wasn’t able to comprehend what had happened to me for a moment.

It was because it was something that I had never expected to happen.

I looked at Lapis Lazuli with a dazed face, still unable to believe what had happened.

“Lord Dantalian.”

“.....”

“This one said to compose yourself.”

The feeling in my chest settled down.

Lala had slapped me just now.

That itself was not a problem. Did I not also hit her cheek several times earlier? An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. She naturally had the rights to hit me as well. However, the fact that ‘Lazuli had hit me’ was what gave me a shock.

“Lala.....”

“Has your highness finally calmed down?”

“I’m sorry. I did not hit you earlier because I wanted to. I apologize for swinging my hand like some brute. I really am. But I had to make sure if your mother was being sincere or not.”

I spoke in a low voice.

“If I did not properly make this fact clear, then I thought that in the end, you’d be the one to be hurt. At the price of becoming the bad guy, I wanted to guarantee your safety. I will vow on this, I did not have any ulterior motive.”

“This one knows, but that is not the problem.”

Lapis Lazuli shook her head.

“There is no reason to apologize for hitting this one. This one is a peasant. Just being by your highness Dantalian’s side this one is able to bask in an undeserved privilege. The real problem is something

else.”

“What do you mean by the real problem.....?”

“Does your highness not know?”

This type of questions drove me mad.

The other person had the answer but I did not. If that was so, then I should have the right to at least know the question, but for some reason the other person held back both the answer and the question. Was this not excessively unfair?

“Lala. I do not wish to have a debate with you.”

“It is not a debate.”

Lapis Lazuli bowed her head.

“It is a simple test.”

And then Lala left the room.

Without asking for my permission to be excused.

I suddenly found myself alone in the room and blankly stared at the empty space in front of me. It was then that a half-transparent notice window appeared.

Lapis Lazuli's affection went down by 1.

For a long time I stared vacantly at the notice. Because there was no one else in the room to hear my words, I muttered weakly towards the empty air.

“..... What was the problem?”

The sound of birds chirping could be heard through the window.

□ **Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian**
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 20
Niflheim, Hermes' Plaza

“What was the problem?”

Barbatos looked as if she was at a loss for words.

It was the kind of face that looked as if she wanted me to bite my tongue and commit suicide.

“You tried to kill your lover’s mom!”

Hm.

“.....So what?”

“Oh Goddess Persephone. Good God. Why you haven’t taken away this idiotic wuss yet is beyond me.”

Barbatos covered her forehead with her hand.

“Dantalian. Do you want me to tell you really, really honestly?”

“A truthful answer would be much better than a hypocritical answer.”

“Before hearing your story, I sincerely advised you to break up with your succubus lover, right? But now it’s really vague. You retard. If you’re going to be slapped by an outcast, then you deserved to have been slapped hundreds and thousands of times.”

“Oi. What would you have done then?”

I lowered the ice pack.

The cheek that was slapped by Lala was still hot.

“There’s a girl that you really love. But this girl, disregarding her own volition, was born into this world purely because of her parent’s mistake. As soon as she had left the womb she was immediately branded as an ‘outcast’. Even now, Barbatos, you disregard her as well.”

Barbatos creased her brows.

“I don’t ignore people based on social status. I differentiate them.”

“You mean discriminate. Anyways, that’s fine. In brief, the main culprit to make Lapis Lazuli’s life turn into a gutter was that old hag. What was I supposed to do? What would you have done?”

The people who I despised the most was the group of individuals that had a child irresponsibly. My father had done so, and so had my mother.

Normal people couldn’t understand how frustrating it was for a child whose life was already ruined at the age of 10. However, compared to Lala, my life could be considered as a blessing. Her life was crumpled up like a piece of aluminum foil since the age of 1.

“I can’t forgive that old woman. Forgiving her would be wrong. Damn it. I shouldn’t have worried about what Lapis had in mind and just killed that woman then and there.”

“Dantalian.....”

With a sound effect a hologram displayed in front of me.

The other party is disappointed in you.

Demon Lord Barbatos’ affection went down by 3.

“You’re quite the twisted guy, aren’t you.”

Barbatos gave me a look of sympathy.

“You look perfectly fine but the inside of your skull is defective. You don’t even realize that you look like a mental patient right now, do you?”

“I’m perfectly normal.”

“There are two types of people who claim that they are perfectly normal. One is a murderer, and the other is a soon to be murderer.”

Barbatos lowered her back slightly.

She stared at me very seriously.

“Anyone will make mistakes as they live their life. Of course, if they make a mistake then they should be punished. Up to that point is fine. But you’re stating that the punishment must be execution no matter what. And at your lover’s birth mother, at that.”

“If there is a whore who deserves to die, then they should.”

Barbatos let out a sigh.

“..... Did you say your lover’s name was Lapis Lazuli? Damn she’s admirable. How the hell was she able to deal with you? If it were me, I’d have cut your balls off and ran away a long time ago. You two really should just break up.”

“Are you taking my side right now or Lala’s?”

“I don’t know, you idiot.”

Barbatos scratched her head.

“I was hoping that an actual useful rookie had appeared after such a long time, but isn’t he just a complete mental patient? Haaa, my fate is always like this..... If you take out his love affairs then he sort of seems okay, but how the hell do I make this retard function like an actual person.....”

“Hello? I can hear everything you’re saying.”

“Of course you did since I wanted you to hear it. Mr. Bitch, I’m thinking in a present progressive form on whether if I should appoint myself to be your nanny. This is quite the deep shit.”

Barbatos clutched her forehead and groaned.

It was like she was contemplating on how deep she was planning to step into someone else’s life.

If you become concerned with another person’s personal problem then you’d most likely end up in an endless swamp. Barbatos was probably thinking about that sticky feeling.

I wonder if she had finally made a decision.

“.....Okay. Keep talking.”

Barbatos had an expression that appeared as if she had resigned herself to a knot somewhere in her mind.

“Keep talking? About what?”

“You dumbass. I’m talking about your love business. From what you’ve told me up till now, it doesn’t seem like there’s a huge problem between you and your succubus lover yet. You may have quarreled but that wasn’t a big enough fight to result in a break up. Just what kind of shit did you pull during the rest of the month that made that kid so appalled at you?”

“I see you’re talking in a tone as if you’re already certain that I’m the one at fault.”

“Yeah. I’m certain. If you think it’s unfair then prove your innocence, tsk.....”

Barbatos gazed out the window.

It was still mid-day so the outside was bright.

As if she was estimating the weight of the sunlight, Barbatos

narrowed her eyes. The sunlight polished her calves and slid down them.

Honestly speaking, it was charming.

Even the sunlight would be pleased by the fact that it had kissed Barbatos' leg. There was no doubt that it'd at least be happier than falling onto my head. If it weren't for her childish figure, then I may have even fallen for her.

“.....Oi. Where are you looking at?”

Barbatos was glaring this way as if she was looking at something rotten.

I responded honestly.

“I was admiring your leg.”

“It's not free so if you want to admire them then pay up.”

“You can just look at my leg instead.”

“Say that after you shave all your leg hair.”

I shrugged.

“I obtained information.”

Barbatos tilted her head.

“What information?”

“A small letter. There was no name and no sender written on it. Only two sentences were written on it with a quill pen. The content was quite memorable.”

I took out a piece of paper from my pocket and passed it over.

You have an enemy.

10 days from now, an army of 2,000 men will invade your Demon Lord castle.

“Hmm.”

Barbatos let out a noise from her nose.

“A straight up threat is written here, huh.”

“I see it more as a warning than a threat.”

“Why? Even at glance it looks like a bluff.”

“Look at the lines carefully, Barbatos. It may only be two sentences but many implications are hidden within them. First, ‘You have an enemy’ is written here. This is subtly hinting that ‘I am not your enemy’.”

This was too mild to be treated as a threat letter.

That was why when I had received this message a month ago, Lala and I had contemplated about it.

Who, with what intention, would have sent this kind of letter.

“Looking at the writing style, the personage who had written this letter is of the upperclass and has received professional education. By the way the words are slightly tilted, you can judge the person is either right-handed or ambidextrous.”

“..... You can tell all that?”

“These are all nothing more than assumptions.”

I leaned back into the chair.

I continued talking in a comfortable position.

“There’s also a high chance that the person is engaged in business at the top.”

Barbatos creased her brows.

“Haa? Why the top?”

“If you have eyes then look at the number.”

10 days from now, an army of 2,000 men will invade your Demon Lord castle.

“There’s a comma between the 2 and 0. That’s why there’s a high chance that the person is working in a high position.”

“.....”

Barbatos still had a confused face.

It seemed that this violent child of a Demon Lord was not good at turning her head in this kind of place. I let out a sigh and kindly explained it for her.

“Normal people don’t put a comma when writing numbers in the thousands. They usually write it as 2000 without any special symbol. But the person to have written this letter had habitually added a comma.”

Thus meaning, a person who normally worked with a large amount of money.

A person who would always put a comma whenever three o’s were beside each other.

A person who interacted with large numbers like 1,000,000 on a

day-to-day basis.

“There’s no doubt that this person deals with either accounting documents or ledgers frequently. This person could be a grand chamberlain for a territory, or they could be a merchant that works in a high position.”

“Is that so.....”

Barbatos made a wry face as she looked down at the letter.

“Your brain really isn’t there for nothing.”

“Don’t be moved already. There’re still 5 hidden truths in this letter. But if I were to explain each and every one of them then I’d die of boredom, so I’ll skip them.”

Since olden times, secrets were similar to sex.

When taking off your partner’s clothes you had to carefully remove a single layer at a time. What enjoyment could you possibly get from ripping their clothes off all at once?

Everything was at its highest point of beauty when half-stripped. Like a woman who was only half revealed would be more charming than a fully nude woman, secrets had the best taste when only stripped here and there and then cooked.

C’est si bon.

“This guy is a completely perverted bastard, isn’t he?”

After listening to my esthetics, Barbatos’ face distorted.

“Anyways, you’re saying that there’s a high possibility that the culprit is a merchant, right?”

“Mm. At least from the outside.”

I scratched my forehead.

“Thankfully, I have a deep friendship with merchants. If, perhaps, the person to have sent this letter really was a merchant and was merely playing a prank, then it would be more than easy to catch the culprit.”

“Hm? How?”

I smiled smoothly.

“I told you. Merchants are my friends.”

☐ Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 5
Niflheim, Governor's Palace

“..... This one has never written a letter like this before.”

“Chief. I, too, wish to believe that you're innocent. But you have conspired against me and attacked me in the past, have you not? In other words, you are not completely trustworthy yet.”

“This one no longer plans to be hostile against your highness.”

“That is quite the pity. I'm unable to believe you.”

“.....”

Ivar Lodbrok ground his teeth.

It was clear that he was upset. He did have more than enough reason to be angry, after all.

This person before me was originally one of the highest people of authority. He was the richest person in the demon world as well as the behind-the-scenes ruler of the free city of Niflheim.

That person had fallen and was now acting as my puppet. He yipped like a dog at my every command. It became quite pitiable. Even so, I did not plan to forgive him so easily.

“What does this one have to do in order to gain your highness' trust?”

“Simply do a couple of favors for me.”

“What kind of favors.....?”

“First, I'd like to hire some soldiers.”

It was written on the anonymous letter that an army of two thousand men were going to invade.

Although it was still uncertain whether the letter was true or false, there was nothing bad about being prepared. At the very least three thousand. Yes, I wanted to be prepared with an army of at least three thousand soldiers.

“I consider this to be a light request. If it’s the marvelous Keuncuska Firm then surely you’ll be able to gather three thousand men easily. Do you not think so?”

“.....Of course. Your highness.”

The other party had an expression as if he had chewed on shit.

Oi, your emotions are showing all over your face.

Was he perhaps looking at me with contempt? Was that it. Did he decide that he didn’t have to keep up appearances in front of me?

That was troubling. A pet that looked down on their own owner had no use. It seems I had to teach this vampire manners once more.

“Lodbrok. Do you perhaps dislike me?”

“..... That is not possible. This one holds respect and loyalty for the Demon Lords in this one’s chest at all times.”

“That is a relief. I like you quite a bit as well. I was worried that it might have been one-sided love. One-sided love is only beautiful during one’s childhood. But at this age, is it not vulgar to be caught up in such a thing?”

Ivar Lodbrok looked at me with a doubtful gaze. He was most likely trying to figure out what I was talking about.

I took something out from my sleeve. Well, it wasn’t anything too important. A single strand of hair. It was merely a single strand of

blonde hair.

Ivar Lodbrok grimaced.

“What may that be?”

“I’ll say it again. I like you quite a bit as well. Except, not your elderly appearance but your original body. Your delicate and female form. I prefer that more.”

“.....!”

Ivar Lodbrok’s eyes trembled with unease.

Lodbrok’s main body was a girl with blonde hair. The hair that I had just pulled out was also blonde. What could this mean?

“Surely.....!”

“In regards to your body, I personally prefer your calves. Your petite chest and the outline of your waist is also fine. But I really do think that your calves are the best.”

I smiled.

“If you caress it carefully then you can feel both the firmness of your shin and the softness of your calves at the same time. It felt like my hands would melt because of how soft they were. The rose-like fragrance emanating from your skin almost made me unintentionally want to lick you.”

“Did your highness not promise not to touch this one’s main body!”

Ivar Lodbrok let out an enraged shout.

“This one had betrayed her highness Paimon as your highness had ordered! This one had protected your highness while sacrificing a firm executive! Then why.....!”

“Do not misunderstand.”

I spoke in a carefree tone.

“We did not make a promise. Promises are something that are mutually beneficial. However, our relationship is a bit simpler than that. Chief. It’s absolute obedience.”

“.....”

“Kneel.”

Ivar Lodbrok stiffened.

I wonder if he wasn’t able to properly hear my request. Seeing that he was trapped in an old man’s body, was his hearing perhaps damaged as well? This was certainly possible. Do not worry. I believed in respecting the elderly. I’m a man who was able to show compassion towards elders as much as it is required.

With a gentle tone, I ordered once more.

“Kneel down, chief.”

“.....”

“Go on.”

Ivar Lodbrok slowly bent his knees.

I nodded.

“Now come here.”

“.....”

Humiliation and rage dyed the old gentleman’s face.

I couldn’t help but love whenever a person of power made an expression like that. It felt like I was watching a delinquent mending their own ways. I almost wanted to praise the beauty of mankind out loud.

Ivar Lodbrok crawled towards me.

I took off my shoe and pressed my right foot down against the old gentleman's head. It was, of course, a ridiculing action. Ivar Lodbrok's shoulders trembled.

"Chief."

".....Yes, your highness."

"Please conduct yourself with more caution while standing before me. I did not ridicule you the moment we met. Normally and softly. I treated you like an accomplice of equal standing, and yet, did you not look at me as if you were looking at trash?"

Press press.

I pushed his head down further.

Ivar Lodbrok's nose touched the floor.

"This is why communication is impossible. How long do you plan to leave me in an unrequited love? If you desire for me to respect your dignity, then you must respect my dignity first. Do you understand?"

"This one will, most certainly keep that in mind....."

"Prepare the three thousand troops within 2 days."

I withdrew my foot.

"It'd be troubling if you were to gather a bunch of random people, so I shall request for the best quality of soldiers. According to the message, the invasion will happen in 10 days, so do hurry."

Ivar Lodbrok quickly brought his head back up.

"Your highness. Two days is much too short! At the very least, allow us a week..... no even if your highness were to give us half a month, it would be near impossible to hire three thousand soldiers of

the best quality.”

“What are you talking about? There are plenty of troops nearby.”

“Pardon?”

“Are there not soldiers protecting Niflheim? I heard that the military force here was around 8,000 men. Lend me some from there.”

Ivar Lodbrok opened his mouth.

It was a face as if he had just heard an unbelievable suggestion.

“Your highness! Those are this city’s defenses!”

“And you are the actual ruler of Niflheim. You can move the forces around as much as you please.”

“Please understand! If the soldiers are gone then the method of defending Niflheim disappears with them. Niflheim is a free city that is responsible for all the economy in the demon world. If this place were to fall then a huge misfortune will fall over the entire demon world. If that were to happen while the Black Death is still running rampant.....!”

“Whoa, whoa. Calm down.”

I stood from my chair.

I lifted Ivar Lodbrok back up on his feet and tidily brushed all the dust off of his clothes. Ivar Lodbrok, not sure how to react, was unable to say anything in response.

“Of course there are many things to worry about. The danger you’ll have to shoulder will also be large. I understand everything. I really do. But regardless of all that, chief. It is very unfortunate, but.”

Finally, dusted Ivar Lodbrok’s shoulder.

“That is your problem. Not mine.”

“.....”

I smiled widely.

Ivar Lodbrok was at a loss for words.

“Ah. I should point out that this hair is not from your main body. How could I do such a thing when I respect you so much, chief? Do not worry.”

“Pardon? Then where.....?”

“I plucked the hair off of a dog that was wandering around the governor’s palace after playing with him a bit. That dog’s color and charm was quite refined. As expected, if the owner is well off then even the pets live a life of luxury.”

Ivar Lodbrok’s expression quickly changed.

He must have realized that he had just ridiculed himself all because of some dog hair and was dumbfounded.

That’s why you shouldn’t have retaliated so uselessly. We could have happily gone off on our own ways without having to upset one another. I couldn’t understand the people who insisted on upholding their pride when they knew that they were obviously going to lose. Are you a masochist? Do you enjoy receiving pain on purpose? This is quite troubling that there are so many perverts in the world.....

“Three thousand soldiers. Highest quality. I leave this within your hands, chief.”

“.....Yes.”

“Oh, right. I would also like for you to acquire some information.”

I grinned.

“This as well isn’t a very difficult task so you have no need to be worried. It’s a task to find a single human. Ah, while you’re at it purchase the finest bottle of wine for me.”

“Whatever this one is ordered to.....”

It seems he had finally given up on resisting. Ivar Lodbrok bowed his head. It was cute because his drooping hair resembled dog ears.

The fact that he had a lot of wrinkles was a flaw, but oh well. It’d be better if I just thought of it as raising a pet with a strong sense of pride. I’d feel sorry if I shoved him around too much, so I should give him a reward later on. Oh no. I shouldn’t have a hobby like raising a pet.....

□ Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 7
Niflheim, Governor's Palace

I could hear the sound of paper being shuffled.

I wonder if I had been sweating throughout the night as my back felt wet. I rubbed my eyes and turned my head to see Lapis Lazuli reading a report next to me on the bed.

“Lodbrok?”

“Yes.”

In response to my short question asking if those were the reports from Lodbrok, Lapis Lazuli answered immediately.

One week had passed since we had become lovers. Curiously, our words got across to each other rather well. Should I say that our compatibility was good? No, it might be excessively easy-going to even regard her as my lover.....

“How is it.”

“The level of the information is favorable. The total slave markets located in the northern region of Sardinia is 13. Among them, the amount of slave markets that handle in slaves born from noble families are 4. The slave which your highness is looking for is registered in Pavia.”

Lapis Lazuli took out a single document.

I shook my head and buried my nose into her thighs. It felt as if she had applied some kind of sweet oil on her skin. A delightful scent emanated from her.

“Olive oil?”

“It is Anatolia mountain rose oil. Your highness. If your highness has the time to sexually harass this one, then please take a look at the report first.”

“I do not wish to read words as soon as I wake up in the morning. I’d appreciate it if you could read it out loud in my stead.”

“It’s not morning but the afternoon.”

Lapis Lazuli let out a sigh.

“This one thinks that it’s because of your highness that this one’s life cycle is being ruined. Too much time is being consumed from having sexual relations once. This one advises your highness to lower 4 hours to 2.”

“What am I supposed to do when my stamina is peerless?”

I lightly pecked Lala’s bottom.

“I do not have the tendency to sate my desires quickly. In any case, it’s quite the problem that men these days do not know how to show consideration to women. How pleasant it is to enjoy each others’ warmth and.....”

“This one knows. It is already well-known for this one that your highness is a pervert beyond imagination, so this one does not need another lesson.”

Lapis Lazuli resigned herself and began to read the report.

“—Laura De Farnese. Ever since her birth as an illegitimate child in Duke Farnese’s family, she was confined in the mansion at all times. Although it hasn’t been revealed on who her birth mother is, there is a rumor that she was born after the duke had raped one of the servants.”

“Hmm.”

I stroked Lapis Lazuli's thigh as I listened to her talk.

Lala had no useless fat. It was most likely because she was born as an outcast and spent her childhood starving. Roaming the alleyways and finding scraps from garbage cans. Being cursed at for being a half-breed. Having stones tossed at her constantly.

.....I should have killed that old woman.

I really did regret it.

"It seems Miss Farnese lived a very underprivileged childhood."

Lapis Lazuli continued.

"Not only the mansion, but she was strictly forbidden from leaving her bedroom as well. Her siblings did not consider Miss Farnese as a part of their family, and even the servants treated her as if she did not exist..... Your highness? Are you listening?"

"Of course. I'm listening diligently."

"Although, this one thinks your highness has only been touching this one's thigh since awhile ago."

"I don't know what you're talking about. You're just seeing things."

".....This one will continue reading."

Laura De Farnese.

She was an important character that appeared in <Dungeon Attack>.

Similar to the protagonist, she was an influential individual of that era, but if one were to point out a difference, then it was that she pushed the world into terror instead of hope.

There was a slight complicated political reason that was involved behind this.

The <Dungeon Attack> protagonist, the hero, was affiliated with the 'Empire of Habsburg'. On the other hand, Laura De Farnese worked for the nation known as the 'Kingdom of Brittany'. The empire and the kingdom, wanting to decide who was the true ruler of the entire continent, started a massive war.

There was a chance that, compared to the Demon Lords, the amount of humans that died because of Miss Farnese was higher.

In other words, for the protagonist you could say that she was an opponent far more terrifying than the Demon Lords.

Well, these were things that would happen 15 to 20 years in the future.

In the current time, Laura De Farnese was nothing more than a frail and weak 16-year-old girl.

What was there to hide?

I wanted to snatch this girl who was fated to become a great general in the future in advance.

Since it seemed that 2,000 soldiers were going to invade from an unknown region. While I was hiring troops, I wanted to recruit a commander at the same time. Kill two birds with one stone.

Lapis Lazuli finished reading the report and spoke.

"Your highness. There is something that this one wishes to ask. Why does your highness have an interest in a child from the human race?"

"There is no particular reason. Simply that this child harbors the most hatred towards humans."

I told her a lie nonchalantly.

There was no special reason. It would be more troubling if I were to

answer her honestly and say 'It's something I know because I played the game, but that kid is going to grow up to be the greatest general in the continent'. I could only dramatize a reason and tell it to her.

“.....Hatred, is it?”

“Yes. Think of it while in that girl's position. She was born as an illegitimate child and spent her days forever trapped in her room. She received abuse from the people who were supposed to be her family. She was avoided by even the servants. And now that the family has fallen into ruin, Laura De Farnese has plummeted to being a slave and is being sold at a market. What do you think would be lurking in this girl's mind? What would this girl earnestly desire for? Would she not be nourishing her hatred towards humans?”

“.....”

“To me, I need this kind of child. A child burning with hatred more than anyone else. I need a child who would sell her own soul to the devil if it meant getting revenge on the humans. Laura De Farnese, an individual just to my preferences.”

I chuckled.

Lapis Lazuli looked at me with an impassive expression.

She had eyes that appeared as if she understood but also didn't understand at the same time.

“What? Are you disappointed that it wasn't the answer that you had hoped for?”

“Slightly.”

Lapis Lazuli tilted her head.

“This one was certain that your highness wanted to obtain and enjoy a high quality sex slave from a noble birth.”

“What? What kind of nonsense..... Wait. What kind of person do you see me as?”

“Of course, this one sees it as it is.”

There’s a vassal here that’s treating their lord like a human scumbag!

I vaguely understood the reason why Lapis Lazuli’s affection was yet to get past 10. No, well, I actually am a human, though! I’m not depraved enough to do something disgusting like getting a sex slave.

“Lala.”

I spoke in an incredibly serious tone.

“I’ll use this chance to tell you clearly.”

“What is it?”

“I prefer mature adults.”

It was truly so.

Lolita complex was a mental illness.

“I can’t stand people that still smell like a child. Of course, I prefer large chests over smaller ones, and I prefer a generous bottom over a petite one. Do you understand. People who like a child’s body are all insane with a bunch of loose screws in their heads.”

“Really?”

Lapis Lazuli nodded.

“To sum it up, more than her highness Barbatos, her highness Paimon is closer to your highness’ preference.”

“Before talking about whether it’s close or far, I just dislike a child’s body. Even if the other side approached and offered themselves to me,

I'd decline!"

"That is a shame. If your highness was obtaining Miss Farnese with the intention to sate your highness' sexual desires, then this one was going to actively support the decision, since it meant that this one's burden would be reduced by quite the amount."

"Did you dislike sleeping with me that much!? No, wait. In the end, wasn't it you who came on to me first.....!?"

"My apologies. At that time, this one had yet to realize that your highness was actually a stallion. Your highness had even satisfied yourself fully on the first night, 3 times in a row at that..... Honestly, this one has started to regret it."

"Isn't that too much!?"

I had ended up hearing from my lover of 1 week that she was already regretting her decision.

It may have been merely a physical relationship with no love whatsoever, but I couldn't help but receive a blow.....

While I was chatting with Lapis Lazuli, someone knocked on the door.

"Oh great lord. Your highness' lunch has arrived."

"Ah. It's fine to enter."

It was the maids that were working in the governor's palace.

The maids opened the door and came into the room. Each maid was carrying a silver tray. They looked this way and all their faces froze at once. A man and woman were laying on the bed in the nude. Although we were covered up by a blanket, my upper body was in the open.

"E-Excuse us! Your highness!"

“It’s fine. The one to have ordered for you all to enter was myself, there is no reason for you all to apologize. Pay us no mind and set up lunch.”

“Ah..... Understood.”

The maids gratefully placed the cuisines down onto the table. Although they did their best to be indifferent to us and keep their heads in place, they ended up instinctively peeking at us. Hm? Was it their first time seeing a Demon Lord without clothes on?

Finding it amusing, I silently kept watch of the maids until I heard the sound of a tongue clicking with a ‘tsk’. It was so low that I could have missed the sound. My heart became drastically cold.

“The likes of us shall take our leave now.”

“All of you. Stop right there.”

The maids froze in place at the door.

I unintentionally ended up speaking in a cold voice.

“Who was the one to click their tongue.”

“Pardon?”

“Do not play innocent. I clearly heard one of you click your tongue. Confess who the culprit is.”

The maids looked at each other with a panicked gaze. But only for a short moment. Their eyes naturally gathered onto a single person. It was a girl with cat ears from the beast race.

Is that so. Are you the main culprit who clicked their tongue?

I put on a loose gown and got up from the bed.

“.....”

During that time, the maid from the beast race had realized her mistake and started to tremble. Her teeth chattered. It seems her colleagues had predicted what her fate was going to be as they had taken a few steps away.

“Name.”

“J.....J-Julia, is this one’s name.”

“I see. Julia. You have a pretty name.”

In contrast to the compliment, my face was stern.

“Why did you click your tongue earlier.”

“T-This one is terribly sorry, your highness. Please forgive this one!”

“I asked why you had clicked your tongue.”

The maid could not answer.

It was fine. I wasn’t asking her in hopes for her to answer me. I already knew the answer.

This girl didn’t click her tongue at me. Slightly to my side. In other words, while glaring at Lapis Lazuli, she had clicked her tongue.

That put me in a foul mood.

Incredibly.

To the point where I could barely control my rage.

“Are you looking down at the sight of myself being intimate with my lover?”

“No. Your highness, this one did not think anything like that.....!”

“I understand. It must have been very unpleasant to see a mere half-breed peasant in the same bed as a Demon Lord. It must have

been a sour sight for you. That's why you clicked your tongue at my lover, right?"

"T-This one..... This one was....."

I had hit the mark.

That was the kind of feeling I got from her response.

There was nothing more to see.

I walked in long strides towards the wall where swords were being displayed on and pulled one out. The thin blade came out while making a metallic sound. Seeing this, the other maids let out a scream.

"Before being a peasant, she is my fiancée. With what authority are you mocking someone else's lover. Am I ridiculous enough for you to mock?"

"Your highness..... at least this one's life..... please, spare....."

It was really hard to understand.

After falling into this world, only incomprehensible things have been happening.

Why did people look down on others so easily?

Why did people not uphold even the least amount of etiquette?

And finally, why did people attack when they knew they were going to lose?

They had no caution, they had no common sense, and they had no knowledge. As did Paimon and as did Lodbrok. That old hag shook my insides a few days ago and now this maid was trying to start a fight.

That was why.

Since it was full of these kinds of people.

Because there were only these irresponsible people my siblings and I—.

Abruptly, choice boxes appeared with a sound effect.

[1. Punish.]

[2. Spare.]

A half-transparent window that could only be seen by myself.

I strengthened my grip on the hilt of the sword. The other maids held their breath. The beast girl muttered for forgiveness while shedding tears.

To kill or not to kill. All kinds of calculations went through my head. The threatened political status for murdering a servant of the governor's palace. The social impact it would cause. The damage my public image would receive. However, despite considering all these demerits, it was difficult to forgive this girl. It was incredibly difficult. I didn't clearly know the reason why I couldn't, but—.

“Lord Dantalian.”

In a subdued

and always calm tone.

“That is far enough.”

Lapis Lazuli spoke.

I slowly turned my head to Lala.

At that spot were the same eyes which I saw a few days ago.

The same reproachful gaze that was asking if I did not realize what I had done wrong.

“.....”

At that moment.

The inside of my head promptly cooled down.

I was now able to realize how insane my current actions were. For me to try and kill someone just because they had clicked their tongue once. It was ridiculous.

The old lady and this maid before me were different. The old lady was the main culprit to have completely ruined Lapis Lazuli's life. However, all this maid had done was click her tongue. Although she certainly did not know her manners, but that was it. She did not commit a crime that was worth being killed for!

I semi-forcefully poured ice water into my head.

‘Calm down.’

‘Do not make enemies for no reason.’

‘If they’ve recognized their error, then step back.’

Behavior procedures engraved like a manual.

The doctrine that had become nearly instinctive because of my father's education, started to take effect. 1 second, 2 second, and after the 3rd second I had regained my composure.

I arduously opened my mouth.

“.....Have you reflected on your actions enough?”

“Y-Yes! Your highness! This one is terribly sorry! This one will

never do it again!”

“Do not ever forget that emotion. A single mistake could threaten your life.”

I turned to look at the other maids and spoke.

“Keep that in mind. As servants like you all who attend to people of high nobility, each and every one of your actions could lead to an irremediable mistake. Your mistakes will soon be the mistake of Niflheim. Your impudence will soon be the impudence of Niflheim. Act with responsibility.”

The maids all bowed deeply at once.

“”We shall bear that in mind, your highness!””

I nodded.

With this, I had succeeded in giving an evasive response.

“Good. You may leave now.”

And then, the maids quickly made their way out.

[1. Punish.]

[2. Spare.]

The words shined brightly in mid-air.

Then they broke apart and formed new lines.

A kind and merciful decision!

Fame increased slightly.

The lines then split apart into small pieces and dispersed like petals.

I should be delighted that my fame had increased by even a slight amount, but honestly, my current mood was the absolute worst. It was truly at the very bottom. It has been a long time since my mood had been this terrible.

Lapis Lazuli gazed at me silently.

The moment our gaze met I instinctively apologized.

“I’m sorry.”

“What for?”

“That’s.....”

I couldn’t answer.

The feeling of having done something wrong was pressing down against my heart. However, I couldn’t grasp hold of exactly what I had done wrong, not even the smallest amount. This was perplexing.

Silence went by.

In the end, Lapis Lazuli let out a sigh.

“..... Understood.”

What did she understand?

She got up from the bed and put her clothes on. After Lapis Lazuli had completely put on her uniform, she lowered her back and bowed. It was a fluid movement without even the slightest bit of error.

“This one shall make preparations to depart for the slave markets. It should be suitable to hire the Berbere sisters for travel this time as

well. Please come out once your highness has finished eating lunch.”

“Lala.”

“This one shall take her leave first.”

Without looking this way, she opened the door and left.

As I did 4 days ago, I was left in the room alone. Lapis Lazuli may have already been gone, but her rosy scent was still drifting around.

And then, a notice window.

Lapis Lazuli's affection went down by 1.

“.....”

I silently covered my face with my hands.

As I lived my life, I belonged to the group of people who were disappointed by others, I was never part of the group who disappointed others.

But not today.

I had disappointed Lapis Lazuli.

□ Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 20
Niflheim, Governor's Palace

“You know what's the worst part?”

“.....”

“The fact that I had no idea what I did wrong.”

Late evening.

Before I knew it, the scenery outside the window had grown dark.

Barbatos was looking at me under the quietly shaking candle light.

As the outside grew darker, the shadow that covered Barbatos' complexion spread across her face. While supporting her chin with her arm, she silently gazed at me.

“I could at least behave shamelessly if I didn't feel like I had done something wrong. I could even question the other party about what the problem was. But not me, I understood that I had done something wrong; I just had no idea what that was. And..... that is quite the miserable feeling. Exceedingly.....”

“.....”

“Tell me. What could Lapis Lazuli have wanted from me?”

I stared at Barbatos with earnest eyes.

Barbatos had opened her mouth, but no words came out.

So there was no other choice but for me to continue talking.

“Did she want for me to get on my knees and beg? Was that what Lapis wanted from me? For me to throw away my dignity, like a

slave. To toss away something like saving face and simply plea?.....
That could be it. That was more than possible.”

“.....”

“However, why wouldn’t she even tell me what my wrongdoings were?”

I grasped my forehead.

“This drives people mad. Barbatos. This truly is something that drives people mad. Do you know why Lapis didn’t tell me anything?”

“.....I wonder.”

“There was one reason. Lapis wanted for me to realize my mistake on my own. That if she left it alone then I would figure it out by myself. Lapis had expectations for me. Damn it!”

Thud

I hit the floor.

“It was insulting and more insulting. Why it was so..... because she was treating me like a fool. Firstly, she was disappointed that I had not realized my wrongdoings. Second, she was hoping that I would figure out what I had done wrong. Do you understand? Hm? Do you understand how shitty this was?”

I sneered.

But it didn’t come out properly.

The sneer came off more as a forced smirk.

“Lapis was not only judging my current self, but my future self as well. On her own. To her own desire! As if she had me completely figured out! As if, she was considering herself to be standing in a higher position than myself!.....!”

I ground my teeth.

“It was so insulting that I could vomit. It was the first time in my life that I had received this kind of offense. Lapis’ disappointment and expectation became two walls that crushed me even further. In my chest a rage slowly..... an anger slowly built up towards Lapis.”

“Dantalian.”

“I made a resolution in my mind.”

I glared at the candle.

The candle gave off two colors.

The upper portion yellow, the bottom portion blue.

While giving off these colors of light, the light burned and descended down slowly.

“Get caught once. I will wait until the next time she showed disrespect. And if Lapis irrationally ignored me once more.”

I grabbed the wick of the candle with my fingers.

The flame soon flickered and died.

“—When that happens, I will not stay still.”

Chapter Two

The Ethics of Monkey Hunting

□ Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 10
Kingdom of Sardinia, Pavia Slave Markets

“Is two people all?”

“Yes. Myself and my wife.”

“Hm. We’ll accept 2 gold pieces for the escort fee.”

I passed 5 gold to the hired soldier and he grinned widely.

There was an unexpected charm overflowing from the smile of this mercenary who was lacking two front teeth.

“Thank you very much, your honor. Us mercenaries will protect you with our lives during your stay here. Please have an exciting day with your missus. Ooi, escort this couple to their spot! Make sure it’s of the highest class!”

“Roger.”

Outskirts of Pavia.

Slave merchants had set up stalls throughout the open plains in this area.

To prevent thieves from pilfering, soldiers were strictly guarding the entire market. There were 5 platforms of various sizes, approximately 70 guards, and market stalls so grand that you’d mistake this place as a military camp if you looked from afar. Most bandits wouldn’t even dare to mess with this market.

“This way, your honor.”

“Mm.”

Following the man’s guidance, we went to the center of the market.

Lapis Lazuli and I were pretending to be a young merchant couple. We had exquisitely forged our identification papers and names. With this, we wouldn’t have to worry about our actual identities being found out any time soon.

The slave market was overflowing with a shady and damp ambiance.

“Move it already! You damned dullards.”

“Snow elves here! Captured straight from the deep snowy mountains in the kingdom of Moscow. As a special occasion, I’ll be displaying them for free today. Please come and take a look!”

“I told you to walk more quickly!”

On one side, a guard was swinging a whip and forcing a group of slaves to move. A line of 6 male slaves were chained together and walked forward a little bit at a time. It felt like I was watching a caterpillar.

“Please look as much as you want. Looking is free!”

On another side, a naked elf was locked up behind iron bars. A sales promoter kept going on about how amazing his ‘product’ was while pointing at the elf’s breasts and ribs. There were many people gathered around the iron cage, and there were even kids among them. Little girls were sticking their heads through the bars and staring at the bare elf.

I could hear their conversation.

“Big sis, is it true that elves live off of only drinking dew?”

“.....”

“Uhm, I don’t think she understands what we’re saying. I don’t know how to speak the language used in Moscow, too……”

“They say that elves drink the raw blood of kids every year. That’s why they stay pretty for a hundred and two hundred years.”

“You idiot! Don’t lie!”

The group of little girls giggled. The elf smiled softly as she watched the kids. When the children reached their hands out, the elf more than gladly put her arm out to let them touch her skin. Although the elf’s arm was thin and mostly bones, the little girls were making a commotion as if they were touching something like gold.

“These mischievous kids!”

The sales person lifted the children up while laughing heartily.

“You can’t touch the product thoughtlessly like that!”

I watched up to that point and turned away.

—Kuaaaaaaah……

The sound of a whip lashing and a slave screaming could be heard in the distance, and yet no one in the market area paid it any mind. The only ones to pay attention to the screaming were the kids. Each time they heard a moan, the children would get excited and ask “Did you hear that? Did you hear that?”. Every time they heard a scream, they would echo the sound with their own voices shouting “Kaah!” “Kueeak!”.

Was it because of their innocence, perhaps?

I muttered.

“This is quite the splendid place. Are all slave markets like this?”

“Yes. There are not a lot of differences.”

Lapis Lazuli responded.

“The slave market that this one was indebted to for a short period of time, during this one’s childhood, had the same feeling as this.”

“What? You worked at a slave market before?”

“To be precise, this one did not work at a slave market, but wanted to become a slave instead. At the time, this one was incredibly famished. This one had thought that as long as this one was able to obtain a meal, then it would be fine to become a slave. Since slaves were at least fed.”

Lapis Lazuli spoke calmly.

“However, once the slave merchant found out that this one was a half-breed, he had chased this one out. Apparently, outcasts did not have the ‘right’ to become a product to be dealt in. Regardless, before this one’s identity was revealed, this one was able to eat half of a stale bread. It is a good memory.”

“.....”

Lapis Lazuli’s past was so dark that it was scary.....

Doing whatever I could to change the topic, I cleared my throat.

“The succubus that used to wander these market grounds is now the mistress of a Demon Lord. Is that not splendid, Lala? A person’s worth is not determined by their birth. You, who was able to overcome all kinds of unfavorable conditions, have the most beautiful value out of them all.”

Lapis Lazuli gave me a side glance.

“.....Your highness sure does make surprising remarks occasionally.”

“Hm?”

“It is nothing. Your highness had complimented that this one had succeeded, but that is woefully inadequate. Until your highness has become a true ruler of demons, until that moment is when this one’s success can be put up for debate.”

“You are quite the greedy woman.”

I smiled.

“That’s why I like you.”

“There is nothing for your highness to be flattering this one for.”

“I am not hoping for much. I would simply like it if there was more charm mixed in tonight’s affairs. In the first place, when we do ‘that’ your face is so stonelike that it’s rather fun to.....”

Lapis Lazuli stepped on my right foot. The heel of her shoe was stabbing into the bridge of my foot so it hurt quite a lot, but in contrast, I felt delighted.

Yes. This was the same Lapis Lazuli as usual. The same Lapis Lazuli that was cool-headed, calm, and would react moderately to my teasing. Feeling a rare sense of relief from that, I unpacked my things at the quarters that the hired soldiers had guided us to.

That night, we had received an invitation to a banquet with the slave merchants.

It was worth giving that soldier 5 gold. The people on the market’s side had recognized us as VIPs and had given us an invitation.

I wonder if it was because the banquet was for slave merchants, but the gathering was rather extravagant. There were several guards standing as security and beautiful slaves were serving the food in the nude. I had soon mixed in with the group of merchants and chatted with them.

Alcohol went around appropriately. It was just the right amount for

people to become intoxicated. During this sort of ambitious night, this was the most appropriate time to induce people into confessing their inner-thoughts. Now, shall we get down to the point.....?

“This is the first time in my life seeing such a luxurious slave market. I have been to several slave markets in the past that were of a larger scale, but if you compared the quality of the products between here and there, they can’t possibly match with the excellence here. It is wonderful, everyone. I am truly moved.”

“Haha. You’re thinking too highly of us.”

The slave merchants laughed with bright red faces.

An enlivened mood flowed throughout the room. Everyone gave a favorable impression. For people who dealt in slaves, it was hard to believe how harmless these people appeared. Did they not even have the slightest amount of guilt for selling slaves?

Well, that was probably how the people of this current age were like. This wasn’t an issue that I should get involved with. Revolutions should be left in the hands of revolutionaries, and politics should be left in the hands of politicians. That was my creed. Albeit, there were many people who got these two jobs mixed up.

“There is something that I am slightly curious about, though.”

“What is it? Tell us.”

“Like how a single flower could overwhelm an entire ballroom of people, would there not be a slave with the highest value in this market as well? What does everyone here consider to be the flower of this market?”

The merchants looked at each other after hearing my question.

Shortly after, they started to make a commotion.

“Of course, would it not be the snow elf that I captured from

Moscow? I had to hire no less than 20 hunters just to catch that bugger. There is no doubt that my product is the best.”

“Pfft. Honestly, the elf trend is already over. These days, sirens and mermaids are the big thing. In that sense, the siren that I went through a lot of trouble getting my hands on.....”

“Ha! How could some beast with wings cause any fuss? It’d be a doubtful if you could even get 20 gold off them. They may be a rare species and appropriate for livening up the atmosphere, but you can’t call them the leading star of the market. That’s for certain.”

“No, of course you should rate them higher based on their rarity. I’m actually thinking of putting out my ace in the hole and showcase a centaur. If it’s a horse than the noble ladies would.....”

They clamored.

The argument on whose slave was better continued on.

After a while, a slave merchant pointed towards a young man and spoke.

“How about your side, Giacomo? I heard you really resolved yourself to prepare a product for this time.

“.....It’s not as great as everyone else’s list of goods.”

The young man furrowed his brows as he responded.

He was the young man who had been silently drinking wine throughout the entire banquet. Although the other merchant was trying to bring attention to his slave, he had refused. Seeing the way his complexion had darkened, it appeared as if he was displeased about something.

“To say it’s nothing great! That’s quite modest of you!”

“That’s right, Giacomo. We aren’t deaf, we heard the rumors. We

heard that you succeeded in obtaining the illegitimate child from a Duke's family."

The youngster made a bitter expression.

It seemed he was uncomfortable that the attention was focused onto him.

".....I was lucky. That is all."

The man then tipped his wine glass.

I furtively curled the edges of my mouth as I stared at the young man.

Found him.

I was certain that that man was the slave merchant who was in possession of Laura De Farnese.

Enduring my laziness to participate in this banquet was worth it. To be able to find my target so quickly. I was lucky.

Acting surprised, I raised my voice.

"Wait, everyone. The illegitimate child from a Duke's family? What is that about? I'd like to hear more details."

"I'm not sure, but that fellow, Giacomo, obtained quite the prize at such a young age. It's that guy's first time debuting in the slave market industry, but my God, he got his hands on a product that's a big shot among big shots!"

"They say it's the illegitimate child from Duke Farnese's House."

The merchants got excited and started to make a big fuss.

"A duke's family. And not some small family, but the Farnese family! Naturally, their status did indeed drop to the rock bottom after losing in the last War of Roses, but still....."

“Well, it’s an open secret. They probably didn’t want to shift the responsibility for their defeat to one of their actual heirs. So they sold off their illegitimate daughter as a compromise. Although, this is merely in the field of speculations.”

“Wouldn’t that probably be the right guess? Other possibilities are impossible..... That missy was selected as a scapegoat for the family.”

Someone clicked their tongue.

“The ones that came out on top after the War of Roses are happy they got to dishonor the Farnese family, and the Farnese family is happy that they were able to lower their losses to a minimum.”

“If you look carefully, those noble folks are better at business than we are. Keke. Those people on top sure know their stuff.”

“Furthermore, they say that ‘that’ isn’t a joke.”

A merchant mentioned while chewing on a chicken leg.

I put a fascinated expression on my face.

“What do you mean by ‘that’?”

“That, I’m talking about that. Her face and body are just so..... kuuh!”

The merchant laughed wickedly. Sticky brown sauce was smeared all over his fingers. The other merchants agreed enthusiastically.

“I heard that rumor too. That she was the confined princess of Farnese!”

“Yeah. That because she was a woman of peerless beauty, they were afraid that it would cause a disturbance in the kingdom. That’s why the duke purposely hid her away in the deepest part of the mansion so no one could see her.”

“Well, honestly, it’s probably a bunch of lies.”

The merchants shrugged.

“No matter how you looked at it, they probably hid her because they were ashamed..... But what does that matter? Just the mere fact that those kinds of rumors came attached with her is special. Rumors raise the value of the product, after all.”

“Mm. I guess that’s right. For starters, she’s from one of the most noble families in the kingdom.....”

“The rumor that she was the most beautiful girl on the continent went around once.”

“And she’s at the ripe age of 16!”

The merchants broke out into laughter all together.

The only person unable to go along with the mood was the young man. He had maintained a stoic face.

“..... Please excuse my going first. Good night.”

The man stood from the table and casually walked out.

The other merchants wished him a good night as well, but the young man received it absently. It’d be hard to look at it as a positive behaviour. Once the youngster was gone, the other merchants immediately voiced their opinions.

“Isn’t he acting a bit arrogantly? We invited everyone of the same trade like this so we could get to know our colleagues better, but if he behaves like that.....”

“He really has no manners. He’s just running wild while relying on his father’s reputation. All the young folk are like that these days.”

It seems the way young people behaved in this world and my original world was the same.

I put on a smile and stood up.

“I wish to look around the marketplace early in the morning, so I shall be returning to my quarters for the day as well. Everyone, please have a pleasant night.”

“Ooh. Sleep well.”

After receiving the farewells from the merchants, I made my way out of the banquet hall. After instructing Lala to go outside the marketplace and prepare for any situation, I chased after the young man by myself. Not having gone far, the sight of the young man walking through the marketplace by himself came into view.

“Sir Giacomo. Sir Giacomo!”

“Yes.....?”

The youngster turned to look at me.

He had eyes that appeared as if he was looking at a suspicious person.

I put a broad smile on my face.

“Would you, perhaps, like to share a conversation with myself?”

Let’s soften up this novice.

▯ Methoranum Peddler, Slaver Merchant, Giacomo Petrarch
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 10
Kingdom of Sardinia, Pavia Slave Market

In one corner of the market area, I was drinking beer with a strange peddler.

It was weird. I couldn't really remember how I ended up drinking like this. It sort of felt like I had been possessed. Well, there are days in your life where you just blank out.....

“I'm only telling you this, Sir Giacomo.”

The strange man in front of me made a bitter smile.

“To tell you the truth, the very act of selling and buying slaves is discomfoting for me. It feels like I'm doing a crime against humanity.”

“Is that so? I think so as well.”

I happily responded to his remark. This was it. It was because of this characteristic of this man, that naturally made us start drinking together. I wonder if it was a coincidence or pure luck, but the wavelength between the man in front of me and myself was surprisingly good.

“Originally, I didn't want to be something like a slave dealer. However, my father pressured me into it. He said that if I wanted to become a veteran merchant quickly, then there was no better job than a slave dealer.....”

“You have a good father. But, there are many things in the world that are more precious than becoming a veteran. It would have been nice if your father had realized that.”

“That's what I've been saying!”

Oh dear, I unintentionally raised my voice.

But it wasn't strange. It was the first time I had ever met a person who connected with me so well, and in the center of the slave market at that. Was this not quite the eccentric encounter?

"My father is too attached to money. Yes, a merchant's job is to make money and transport goods. I don't have a problem up to that point..... But, aren't slaves people too? Be it humans, elves, or sirens..... to treat them like some exhibit....."

"I understand. Ah, I see your cup is empty. Here, have another glass."

"Thank you....."

I gulped down the wine that the man poured me. I felt a very pleasant drunkenness rising. It seems I really needed a person that I could openly talk to. It felt like I was drinking more heavily than usual, but it was okay. This was within my acceptable range.

And thus, time flowed. Before I knew it, I found myself leading the man to the quarters on my platform.Huh, why did I bring him here?

"How marvelous. To refrain from putting chains on most of your slaves, that is quite the humane consideration you hold for them."

The man looked on in admiration at the slaves on the wagons.

Aah, that's right. I remembered now. He asked if he could take a look at my slaves and I had gladly accepted his request. Even though you aren't allowed to bring guests into this area..... It shouldn't be too much of a problem, right? This person wasn't a simple guest, he was my friend.

Now that I think about it, what was his name again?

"The majority of people only talk about it but never try it themselves. You are different, Giacomo. You are truly treating your

slaves with warmth. I can see that with my own eyes. It is splendid.”

“Ahaha, you’re exaggerating.”

Oh well, something like names weren’t important. The most important part when judging a person was by their personality. This man was okay to be trusted. He possessed a good personality.

“Except, I don’t think every single slave would be satisfied.”

“Pardon?”

What could he be talking about?

It may not be a boast, but in my opinion, there was no other merchant that showed concern for their slaves as much as I did. I regularly gave them two meals a day, and obviously, the slaves liked me as well. But to say that they weren’t satisfied.....

“Oh dear, that was rude of me. I was simply thinking while in the slaves’ perspective.”

The man smiled softly.

“Before being captured by us, did these slaves not live a rather peaceful life? They must have been able to move around freely and live their lives to their desire. I felt that they’d most certainly still have some dissatisfaction even if they were to receive their meals on time.”

“Think in the slave’s perspective.....”

It was surprising. I had never considered this before.

I’m a free man and they’re slaves. We were clearly different. There was no reason for me to be forcing my own thoughts onto them when they were completely different from myself. But I had regarded it like that.....

That it was more than enough to treat them with just the slightest bit of consideration. To think in the slave’s perspective? Was that

possible? Was that not an excessively idealistic way of thinking.....?

“How is it actually?”

While I was receiving a shock from the man’s words, he threw a question at me.

I perked up in alarm. What were we talking about? I couldn’t remember the context of our conversation. My head felt dizzy since awhile ago.

“What is actually.....?”

“I’m referring to Miss Farnese. Have you already forgotten?”

Farnese? Was he talking about Miss Laura De Farnese?

No, since that family was deprived of their noble peerage, I couldn’t call her by using that family name anymore. But I couldn’t clearly remember if we really did have that kind of conversation. Oh dear, I think I drank way too much.

The man calmly explained.

“Did I not ask if Miss Farnese was satisfied with her life as a slave? Once I did, you, Sir Giacomo, said that you would personally show her to me.”

“Ah. That’s right. That’s right..... I forgot for a second.”

I still didn’t feel certain while I was responding.

Miss Farnese was a valuable of the highest quality. In order to prevent thieves from stealing her, I had hidden her at the deepest part of my platform. Even if he was my friend, I couldn’t show it to him lightly. I was starting to regret it. How could I have made such an irresponsible promise.....

The other party immediately noticed my complexion and spoke.

“I see. It seems you’re actually conflicted to show her to me.”

“No, the truth is.”

“It is fine. Please do not feel any pressure from this. I was merely suggesting this with a light heart. I was just curious as to how you truly handled your slaves, and how your slaves sincerely felt towards you.”

The man smiled bitterly and muttered.

“I am the one who should be apologizing. Due to my curiosity, I had ended up forcing Sir Giacomo into a delicate situation. Let us return to the pub.”

“Ah.....”

After seeing the man’s forlorn expression, an indescribable guilt built up in my chest. It was that. The other party had merely requested something of me while thinking of me as a friend. But what was I doing?

In the end, was I not treating him like a stranger? What made me different from those people at the banquet hall who whipped their slaves? I was the worst. If those merchants were the villains, then I was nothing more than a mere hypocrite.

“.....No. Please wait. I shall guide you to where Miss Farnese is at.”

“Pardon?”

The man blinked his eyes in surprise.

“Is that truly okay?”

“Of course. There’s no problem if we’re to simply look and come back. Thankfully, Miss Farnese does not sleep at night, so it should be fine to visit now.”

“..... Sir Giacomo. If you feel any difficulty from my request, then

you may refuse at any time.”

The man was giving me a worried look.

“It may have only been a few hours since we have met, Sir Giacomo, but I feel a friendship between us. I do not wish to burden a friend.”

I was moved by his consideration. I told him that it was okay, but the man was still being considerate of me and was trying to refuse. What was I possibly hesitating for in front of such a good-natured person!

A smile naturally formed on my lips; the touch of anxiety that remained in my chest had melted away like snow.

“No, it’s fine. I, myself, also want to hear Miss Farnese’s opinion. If anything, I’d like to request for you to come with me. If it’s possible for me to think while in the slaves’ position..... the things that I have been lacking up till now. I wish to discuss this with you.”

“.....”

The man’s eyes widened.

Until eventually, he smiled. It was a very soft smile.

“Giacomo. You know how to respect others. That is a precious ability that comes from your heart. It’s not something just anyone can learn. I truly respect you.”

I was at a loss for words from his straightforward compliment.

Although I wasn’t able to say anything and my mouth was hanging agape, the man was simply smiling at me in silence. As if he was telling me that he understood everything about me..... No, it was as if he understood the amount of appreciation that I desired from the world, it was that kind of smile.

“Ah, well uh. You know.”

“Yes.”

The man grinned.

“Go ahead, Sir Giacomo.”

“That is..... T-This way. Please follow me.”

Feeling embarrassed, words wouldn't come out properly.

For some reason, I felt too shy to look him in the face. Yes, it was because I was drunk. My emotions were going on and off because of the intoxication. There was no meaning beyond that. None at all. Really.

My head slowly became dizzier. It was becoming harder to keep myself steady. Even if I tried to pass it on while regarding it as my imagination, my vision was throbbing too much. It was weird. I shouldn't be this weak to alcohol.

“J-Just a little further.”

My words started to become strained. My consciousness quickly drifted away.

“Just a little bit more and the cell that the Miss is confined in.....”

“It's alright, Giacomo.”

The man lightly supported myself, who was swaying left and right.

Once I rested my head on the man's body, all my strength left my body.

While my eyes started to close slowly, I could hear the man's voice.

“It seems you drank a bit too much tonight. I shall take responsibility and carry Sir Giacomo back to your quarters. That's

why, please rest easy.”

A voice that sounded like a mother’s lullaby.

Feeling comfort from that, I closed my eyes.

Despite the fact that the inside of my head was all disorganized, there was one truth that I was certain of. I had gained a friendship that would last forever.....

□ Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 10
Kingdom of Sardinia, Pavia Slave Market

Well then, that was a breeze.

I laid the young man down on the floor and smiled wryly.

“You shouldn’t trust a person like me so easily, friend.”

I had effortlessly conquered this youngster who appeared to be around 19 years old. I had merely complimented him moderately, but he got excited on his own and crossed over willingly. It was so easy that it was ridiculous. Was it thanks to my talent, or was it because this fellow was excessively pure as a merchant.....?

Of course, the answer was because I was talented.

I knew that very well.

If I ever spoke modestly then it was simply because of etiquette.

Additionally, his affection went up by an outrageous amount.

We had only spent 2 hours drinking together, but his affection points had shot past the 10s, breached through the 20s, and lastly reached the 30s. And yet, Lapis Lazuli’s affection was still at 10. Why was it that I received more affection from men than I did women? It must be the end of the world.

“Status.”

After muttering the word under my breath, a hologram appeared before me.

A type of status window that only appeared if the affection was over 20.

Name: Giacomo Petrarch
Race: Human
Job: Merchant (E)
Reputation: Previously Failed Scholar

Leadership: F **Might:** F **Intelligence:** E
Politics: F **Charm:** C **Technique:** F

Affection: 32

Current Mental State: 'Friend.....'

What an adorable nature this is.

In a certain meaning, instead of a girl like Lapis Lazuli, whose intentions I couldn't even begin to grasp, these kinds of people were considerably more complacent.

A type of person who did their best to respect others, despite being weak-minded and slightly naive.

Most people may ridicule these kinds of people as pushovers.

But at the very least, I didn't.

If anything, I slightly envied them.

.....Because I could never become like them.

"Just think of it as being caught up with a rotten person."

I searched through Giacomo's coat until I got my hands on a bunch of keys.

The keys made a metallic jingle as I took them out. The key to Laura De Farnese's cell was most likely among these.

Stealing is wrong? That's a given. I'm a bad person, so I did something like stealing normally.

I sold off something like guilt a long time ago.

As I lived my life, I came to the realization that the need to carry around something like that was non-existent.

I'm not sure what a masochist, who enjoyed receiving pain, would think. As a healthy and sensible sadist, I was out of the question.

“Mmmm.....”

Giacomo Petrich let out a sound while in his sleep.

Since I had laced his beer with rather strong sleeping pills, he was going to be snoring away like that for a while.

I patted Giacomo's head.

“Sleep well. Laura De Farnese is an individual that is too much for someone as good-natured as you to handle. All you have to do is dream happily and leave her in my hands.”

“.....”

“It'd be more beneficial for Laura De Farnese, for you, and for me. You did nothing wrong.”

I wonder if he was able to hear my words while unconscious.

Giacomo Petrich's face slowly became relaxed.

The sound of deep breathing flowed from between his lips.

Good.

The sweet child has closed his eyes.

It was time for the utterly crooked individuals to skulk around like

specters in the night.

Holding the keys in my hand, I walked forward. My destination soon came into view. Between two wooden wagons an iron cage resided.

The moonlight gently poured down.

Despite the iron bars being bathed under the moonlight, it did not shine but withdrew further into darkness instead. It was as if it repudiated anything on the outside from approaching it, even mere luminescence.

There was a separate thing that was being shined upon by the light. It was not the cage, but rather the girl who was trapped within.

The girl was wearing dirty rags similar to what a beggar would wear. It must have been several days since she was able to last wash, since there was dirt smeared over her skin here and there.

And then, the moon in the night sky was covered by clouds for a slight moment before reappearing once more. The moonlight descended again upon the girl's skin making her shine brightly.

“.....”

I unintentionally held my breath.

Whoever were to come, they would all be overwhelmed by this girl's beauty.

However, the reason why I had my breath taken away from me for an instant was not because of this girl's beauty. Something completely different had moved me emotionally.

—The slave girl was reading a book.

In the middle of this boundlessly dreary cage.

Using the moon as her only source of light.

With a thick book spread open on the floor before her, she silently turned the pages with her blistered hands.

There was something breathtaking about this extraordinary sight.

If one were to ask why, then it was because there was absolutely nothing that could get in her way.

This may have been my first time seeing her, but I immediately understood everything.

The disgrace and shame from having fallen from nobility and into slavery, the countless number of times people had beaten and hurled abuses at this girl, the despair and sorrow for being thrown away by her own parents. Miscellaneous emotions had absolutely no effect on her now.

She was already a completed human.

Closed off.

In darkness.

“.....”

I approached the cage with loud steps.

Despite having purposely made my footsteps resound, the girl did not raise her head.

She simply stared down with no expression on her face.

Was she so focused on the book that she couldn't hear any outside noise?

I stepped between the moon and girl.

A dark shadow loomed over her. Now, for the first time, the girl slowly raised her head to match my gaze, with eyes that lacked even the smallest amount of light.

Laura De Farnese.

The human to go against the hero and turn the continent into a sea of blood.

To the girl who was abandoned by her family and the world, I spoke.

“—My name is Dantalian, the rank 71st Demon Lord.”

Without any pretense.

Petty tricks didn't work against people with these kinds of eyes.

Always straight and honest, that was the best persuasion method in this sort of situation.

“De Farnese. I came here in order to obtain you.”

“.....”

“I am wealthy. Thus I can easily buy you at the slave auction whenever I please. My witches and military troops are lying in wait around this marketplace, thus taking you away by force is also fully a possibility.”

It was not a lie.

Around this time, Lapis Lazuli was most likely preparing to start an assault at the outskirts of the market. The Berbere Sisters were with her. My forces were waiting at a moment's notice.

11 witches of the highest class, and 9 soldiers of the highest class.

The defenses of this slave market was comparatively sturdy, but it was still nothing more than 70 guards. Utilizing the witch's firepower, we could easily turn them all into grilled meat. Snatching Laura De Farnese away and disappearing leisurely was not difficult.

If I were to give the order then it was simple.

Despite that.

“But I desire to be acknowledged by you.”

I wanted to leave those as a last resort.



“Not by wealth or by force. Purely person to person, I wish to be accepted by you. Please judge me with your dim eyes. Determine if I possess the caliber to take you in. Evaluate myself factually.”

“.....”

“Can you allow me the opportunity to take your test?”

A stillness settled over us.

The girl gazed vacantly at me.

We didn’t avoid each other’s gaze. Until the third cloud had covered the moon, time flowed silently.

The girl moved her lips.

“—Stop blocking the moonlight and move aside.”

It was an inorganic voice.

Like a machine unnaturally trying to imitate a human’s voice.

Regardless, I nodded.

In this location, this girl had perfectly established her own kingdom. The book was her everything. Thus, the act of covering the light meant that I was invading her kingdom. I promptly complied to Miss Farnese’s request and stepped slightly to the side.

Miss Farnese nodded.

“I express my thanks. You are a gentle person.”

“Respecting another’s domain is a basic, after all. Even if you were to become my vassal, I shall always respect your will like I have done now.”

“Vassal?”

Miss Farnese tilted her head.

“Not claiming as a sex slave, but as a vassal instead?”

“That is so. If I wanted to treat you like a slave, then I would have bought you with gold or have undertaken action in a violent fashion. But I judged that wealth and power was not required to persuade you. Laura De Farnese. I purely wish to obtain you.”

“If that was a love confession just now, then this young lady would surely have been moved.”

Miss Farnese placed her hand on her chin.

Referentially, Laura De Farnese had spoken in 4 different languages. Sardinian, Habsburgian, Franconian, and Ancient Helasian. It wasn't merely a simple conversation. She was testing me on how far I could keep up with her.

I easily passed her fundamental test. No matter where I was, if it involved languages then I couldn't be brought down. If anything, I was rather self-confident that this was my specialty. From this point on was the main event.

“I am honestly thankful for your offer. The only other remaining fate left for this young lady is most likely being sold off to some wealthy noble and living a life as a tool for sexual release.”

“Aah. That is correct.”

Due to the information that I was able to obtain in <Dungeon Attack>, I had a general outline of what Laura De Farnese's destiny was. It should be fine to mention future events briefly here.

“The person to buy you in the auction will be Count Roswell from the Kingdom of Brittany. Publicly, he is praised as a man with a noble personality, but in truth, he is a sadistic pervert.”

“Hou.”

Did I pique her curiosity? Miss Farnese showed an interested response. Although, her eyes were still dim.

“Tell me in more details.”

“With pleasure. Count Roswell considers locking up fallen nobles, like yourself, in his underground torture chamber as a joy in life. Because his preferences are so vast, he enjoys things from candle wax torture to amputation.”

“Amputation? What is that?”

“There are many types of perverts in the world, Miss De Farnese.”

I smiled gently.

“Among them, there are a type of people who gain carnal desires for women with their legs and arms cut off.”

I always felt satisfaction whenever I was able to reveal the cruel reality to a girl who was ignorant of the world. You could say that it felt like I was helping a bit in that child’s education.

I’m a friendly man, after all.

“If you were to be sold off to Count Roswell, then there is no doubt that you will be gang raped in a prison cell, where even sunlight cannot reach, for 10 years. If you are unlucky, then you may experience abortion several times as well.”

“That is indeed the worst individual to become a slave of. I can endure being tortured by candle wax, but this young lady does not think she could possibly manage having her limbs severed.”

“Is it because you will be unable to read books?”

“Yes. I’ll be unable to read books without my limbs.”

Miss Farnese answered seriously.

I had assumed she was this kind of girl.

“But, oh Demon Lord. It’s rather hard to believe that you’re planning to use this young lady for something other than a sex slave. As you can see, this young lady is quite beautiful. Even if you were to take myself in as a vassal, how could this young lady be certain that you won’t be captivated by this lady’s looks later on and violate her?”

It was a Missy who said nonsensical things as if it was natural.

Being slightly put off, I creased my brows.

“.....You. Do you, perhaps, often hear from others that you’re very conceited?”

“Pardon me. I am simply evaluating my own beauty objectively. Throughout my life, 4 times from my own father, 11 times from my half-brothers, and 2 times from my half-sisters, this young lady had almost been raped by them. This lady’s beauty is most certainly out of the ordinary. It is quite unfortunate.”

“What? You were almost raped by your half-sisters?”

Even the Demon Lord was surprised by this.

Miss Farnese spoke bluntly.

“There are many types of perverts in the world, oh Demon Lord. Among them are women who feel carnal desire for people of the same-sex. Adding to that, there are also women who have an incestuous desire for people of the same blood.”

Her line had the exact same cadence as what I had said earlier while trying to show off. It was her counterattack to me for having behaved like a grown-up.

I unintentionally ended up admiring this girl’s wit.

“.....Impressive.”

“You do not have to compliment this young lady, since this young lady had come to terms with her own genius when she was 6 years old.”

“Oh, really? What a coincidence. The time I realized that I was a prodigy was at the age of 6 as well.”

“Mm, is that so? This young lady should add that she had become self-aware of her own superiority in intellect after having witnessed her siblings struggling to master a single geometry theorem even after the age of 10.”

“I became self-aware after seeing that my younger half-siblings were unable to learn even 2 languages by the age of 5.”

“Aah. It’s certainly difficult to understand why people struggle with foreign languages. Do you not naturally master a language after listening to it for half a year?”

“Precisely so. It’s something that I can’t understand.”

“Whenever this young lady sees a group of people confused about the simplest of truth, while this lady feels sadness and pity for them, at the same time this young lady feels more suspicion instead. How could they have possibly lived for this long with that kind of head? If this young lady was ever to be in their position, this young lady would have immediately killed herself.”

“The majority of people are born pitiful. It can’t be helped. There’s no other choice but for people like us to politely teach them what intelligence and etiquette are.”

“Oh Demon Lord. Is that not a tedious task?”

“It is incredibly tedious. However, despite everything, we are still a part of the community that resides on this world. Very occasionally, we need to know how to sacrifice ourselves for a good cause.”

“By ‘very occasionally’, do you mean once in a lifetime?”

“If it’s that much then that’s more than enough—”

Ah!

I involuntarily got absorbed into the conversation.

The expression that I had put on for acting purposes had grown faint at some point.

The chemistry between myself and this girl was good beyond imagination.

“Oh, right. Furthermore, this young lady occasionally does not speak and goes into her own world for an entire week. If we are to spend time together, then please take this into account.”

“Ah, I too occasionally shut myself in my bed and refuse to come out for 4 days at a time. On those occasions, I do hope that you will respect my personal life.”

“Of course. Also, this young lady tends to play the violin very loudly. Additionally, there are times this young lady will be driven by her enthusiasm and begin to sing as well. So if you are to live with this young lady, then you must consider this as well.”

“Violins are the pleasure of life.”

I nodded my head earnestly.

“Oh, do you think so?”

“The melody from a harpsichord flows too stiffly, so it gives off a strong mechanical feeling. But do violins not express the intense vibrations of life? Music is vibrations, and nothing besides vibrations. An oboe is quite marvelous as well, but if you were to compare the two, then the violin would still be on top.”

“This young lady agrees entirely.”

“.....”

“.....”

We stared at each other.

I carefully opened my mouth.

“Say. I’m not sure if it’s a misunderstanding, but.....”

“Mm?”

“I’m not sure why, but it feels like you and I will be able to get along quite peacefully.”

“What a peculiar coincidence. This young lady shares the same opinion.”

“This may be abrupt, but I have a few questions. Who is the most intelligent person in the world?”

The girl promptly answered.

“Of course, it is the individuals, themselves.”

“What about a person who irresponsibly throws aside a promise and disregards others?”

“It’d only be appropriate to immediately cut off their limbs and sentence them to death.”

“When you see a person who is pure, what thought crosses your mind?”

“How they could possibly live life so foolishly, but at the same time, this young lady is also blinded by their pureness and can’t help but admit that they are a race more superior than this young lady.”

“What is love?”

“A suicidal act of ruin disguised as romance.”

“What is friendship?”

“The emotion that this young lady randomly grants people who do not bother her.”

“What is labour?”

“Proof that God does not exist in this world, and that it’d only be appropriate for it to be eradicated.”

“.....”

“.....”

The girl and I nodded at the same time.

You could readily say that it was a fateful nod.

“Miss De Farnese. I personally dislike a child-like body. I feel more sexual appeal from women with more robust breasts. So thankfully, the chances of myself being captivated by you is incredibly low.”

“Oh Demon Lord. This young lady prefers men who are well advanced in years, so at the very least 50, but if possible 60 years of age. This young lady detests men without any wrinkles. A man’s charm solely comes from their years of experience, thus, the chances of this young lady being seduced by you is very slim.”

We reached out our arms and grabbed each other’s hand tightly.

“—Perfect.”

“—Splendid.”

This had long ago transcended being compatible or not.

I was her other half, and she was my other half. We were born on the same planet, but due to the whim of the Gods, we were separated. Until finally, we were able to reunite with one another here today. There may have been an age difference between us, but that was no

problem. A companion that shared the same ideology was something that overcame generations and age. The decalcomania soul of mine which I couldn't find in my original world was now before me.

A sound effect rang and a notice window appeared.

You've sincerely reached a communion with the other party.

Laura De Farnese's affection went up by 15.

In a single burst the affection points broke past 10.

It took no more than 150 days just to raise Lapis Lazuli's affection up to 10, however it only took 15 minutes in Laura De Farnese's case. What was with this difference in degree?

I see.

Lapis Lazuli was indeed a special case.

I used the key to unlock the cage while being pleased by my own competence.

With a clunk, the cage door opened. After undoing the metal collar around Miss Farnese's neck, every problem was now beautifully taken care of.

"Mmm. This is refreshing."

Miss Farnese walked out from the cage. She then spread her arms out towards the moon in the night sky. It appeared as if she was trying to measure how much of the sky she could capture into her arms.

Time flowed like that for a long time.

Shortly after, De Farnese turned her body towards me.

“—Lord.”

She lowered herself to one knee.

“As long as your lordship does not betray this young lady first, she shall follow your commands loyally. As long as your lordship respects this young lady, she shall devote her soul to you. Laura De Farnese. As the third daughter of the Duchy of Parma and the rightful heir of Piacenza, on this night, continental calendar 1505th year, 9th month, and 10th day, with all the Gods here as witness, hereby vow: If your lordship orders for this young lady to be your sword, then she shall become your sword. If ordered to be your head, then she shall become your head. If ordered to be your legs, then she shall become your legs. This young lady’s will, this young lady’s knowledge, and this young lady’s efforts shall eternally be devoted to your lordship. Lord, I only request of you to bestow upon this young lady a small freedom.”

“I sincerely vow that I will protect thy freedom.”

I gripped Miss Farnese’s hand and stood her up.

Though this was nothing more than a formal verbal promise, this was also the first promise to be established between myself and this girl.

I could not treat it with negligence.

“Dantalian, rank 71st Demon Lord, as the sacred and inviolable representative that symbolizes absolute dignity, and as a member in an order of 72, who rules over all demons, I shall promise: Thy devotion shall be rewarded. Thy loyalty shall be honored. Thy mistakes shall be forgiven. People that hold animosity towards thee shall thus be mine enemies. The houses that had led thee into ruin, thus the House of Medici in Florence, the House of Sforza in Milan,

the House of Agilolf in Pavia— and if thou so desires, then even the House of Farnese in Parma. By any means necessary, I shall avenge thee.”

“.....”

Did my promise come off as a surprise?

Miss Farnese blinked her eyes.

“Are you sane? They are authorities that have entire kingdoms perfectly under their control. Certainly, they are the ones that contributed in this body’s fall into slavery, but.....”

“Do not worry. I shall not repeat my vow.”

I grinned.

“I shall drown the archduke of Florence in the ocean, I shall execute the duke of Milan by puncturing 36 holes into his body, I shall decapitate the count of Pavia and display his head at a crossroad, and finally, I shall leave the fate of the duchy of Farnese in your hands. 10 years. No. I shall achieve your revenge on all these people within 9 years.”

“.....”

“How’s that? If it’s this much then does my intent not come across clearly?”

“.....By the looks of it, it seems this young lady has decided to serve under a preposterous lord.”

Laura De Farnese lightly shook her head.

“This is troubling. If you’re to present me with this many vows then it would be unfair. This young lady shall make one more promise.”

“One more?”

“Aah. If your lordship truly achieves revenge on this young lady’s behalf, then, I, Laura De Farnese, will more than gladly devote even my freedom to you. I will become your slave on my own volition, and happily be your lordship’s possession.”

“Excellent. Swearing on the River of Styx.”

“Swearing on the River of Styx.”

I lightly kissed Miss Farnese’s forehead.

The scent of dirt was strong since she was unable to wash for a long period of time , but for some reason I was fine with it.

It felt like I had gained a little sister who was a spitting image of myself.

While I was at it, I gave her a hug. Miss Farnese’s small body came into my arms. She did not resist. Rather, she leaned her head against my chest. How cute—.

“There is something this young lady is curious about, milord.”

“Speak.”

“Where exactly do you plan to use this young lady? Truthfully, this young lady has no talent in politics. Albeit, this young lady considers her ability to acquire and interpret studies to be an inborn talent and can confidently boast it.”

“Ah. I plan to make you into my acting general. From now on, you shall repel foreign enemies as the supreme commander of my forces.”

“This young lady as the general?”

Miss Farnese’s voice became slightly higher.

It was probably because it was a role that she wasn’t expecting at all.

In the original history, the time that Laura De Farnese's genius regarding military warfare bloomed was 10 years from now. It was after Count Roswell died of poisoning and she had competed for the authority over the count's house. Until then, Laura De Farnese did not know what her true talent was.

Of course.

I was going to wake up that monster inside of her 10 years early.

“What? Was this out of your expectations?”

“Obviously. Although this young lady has read many art of war manuals, this young lady's talent regarding military warfare is most likely non-existent. War is not something an amateur should step forward in. This young lady believes that it's a task that must be evaluated very thoroughly before assigning to someone. Rather than that, this young lady recommends something like a curator of a library.....”

I chuckled.

You were only saying that because you didn't understand yourself fully.

In a tactical battlefield, if you were to face an enemy with the same amount of troops as yourself, your chances of winning was 100%. If your forces were smaller by $\frac{3}{10}$, then you had an 80% chance of victory. If your forces were smaller by $\frac{1}{2}$ then 60%. You were an extraordinary commander that grabbed hold of victory with these chances no matter what.

Even the hero had to mobilize an army 3 times the size of your own in order to defeat you. Laura De Farnese, you were the symbol of both fear and nightmare on the continent. Just by the mere news that you were participating in the battle would make countless number of cities raise their white flag in surrender.

A girl loved by the Goddess of War.

No, the Goddess of War who had become a girl.

That was the girl in front of me who was tilting her head.

“Trust my discerning eyes. You’ll shine brighter when holding the baton in a battlefield than you would reading books. I’ll make it so that history will remember your name.”

“Mm. This young lady is strangely being filled with confidence.....”

Miss Farnese sent me a dubious look.

“To assign a 16-year-old lady to military affairs, it’s an unheard of allocation of personnel. Although this young lady believes that it’s beyond foolish, your lordship’s resolve is very stern. Even if this young lady ends up screwing up the military affairs, do not reproach this lady too much, okay?”

“You’re quite the cynic. I will say this again. Believe in me.”

While lightly patting Miss Farnese’s head, I took out a scroll parchment from my coat and tore it apart. Once I did, a red flame appeared and shot into the sky.

Time to escape.

Booooooom—

The flame exploded like a firework. The guards that were standing night watch must have seen it. The slave market slowly became rowdy. The security forces were moving around desperately trying to find the culprit who had shot the flare.

“.....Hey! Where’d that flare.....”

“.....Damn it, it’s from Methorandum’s side.....”

“.....Cause those loaded pricks are out somewhere throwing their money.....”

In the distance, we could hear people shouting and giving orders urgently.

Moments later, a group of four to five guards came rushing towards us. The torches they were holding illuminated the surroundings. The guards then noticed that Miss Farnese was outside of her cage.

“Hey! Why is a slave outside without permission?”

One soldier showed a bitter face. His eyes were full of caution. If need be, he’d probably stab me if he had to.

I put a smooth smile on my lips as I told them to calm down.

“I am a friend of that merchant from Methorandum lying over there. I was checking the **quality** of the slave with Sir Giacomo, but he had accidentally tore a magic scroll during the process. I apologize for starting a ruckus in the middle of the night, gentlemen.”

The soldiers glanced down at Giacomo Petrarch who was on the floor. Giacomo Petrarch was still sleeping like a log.

“What do you mean by checking the slave’s quality?”

“Well. If I were to give you a demonstration, then it’s this.”

I kissed Laura De Farnese’s nape.

And with my right hand I glided it over her body and smiled.

The guards opened their eyes wide as they gaped at us.

“In a few days, this slave will be sold to Count Roswell in the Kingdom of Brittany. The honorable Count specifically ordered for a luxurious sex slave. But gentlemen, would it not be a big deal if the slave turned out to be frigid?”

“T-That is so, but.....”

“Aah. Be it a big deal or not. As you all may know, the Methorandum merchant is rather young so he’s quite ignorant in regards to this type of thing. That’s why, as his friend, I was kindly doing the check up for him.”

“.....”

The soldiers exchanged glances with one another. It was apparent that they were conflicted. They wanted to arrest the culprit that had fired the flare, but at the same time, they were worried that they might be disrupting a very important task.

“Regardless, this is all work for the honorable count. I probably shouldn’t be saying this, but I’ll let you all in on a secret. Count Roswell’s name is quite high up in the kingdom for his perverted hobby. If by any possibility, the slave is unable to satisfy Count Roswell then who knows what punishment will befall us.”

It was convenient to use prestige in a situation like this. Count, count, count, by uttering this word repetitively I could scare off these guards. *If you guys mess with me then a noble is going to be upset, you know? Are you okay with that?* I was half threatening them like this.

“Ah, okay okay. But be careful with the flares, will you? There’s a chance that the market will get noisy.”

The soldiers took a step back. For commoners like them, a count was an authority far above their reach. Naturally they wouldn’t want to unnecessarily provoke someone like that.

Anyway, they should be arriving to pick me up soon.....

The guards were hesitating.

“Sir. That, uh, for at least security reasons we have to stay here. There’s a rule that 2 soldiers must stick as supervisors whenever a slave is out of their cage.”

“Mm? You can stand guard outside the quarters.”

“Hehe.”

The soldiers gave a dopey laugh.

Their hostility was gone but now appeal had appeared out of nowhere. I didn't understand why they were suddenly behaving like that. If males tried to act cute and appealed towards me, then all that'd do was make my stomach churn. They should show some consideration to my health.

The men sheathed their swords and rubbed their hands together.

“If possible, while you're checking the **quality of the flower** can we watch from the side? Hehe, to tell you the truth, we often bantered with our friends about having our way with that little missy.”

“.....”

Wow.

My face ended up distorting by their honest comment.

The way these guards were squirming their bodies while pleading made them appear like dogs wagging their tails, which made it more unpleasant. Why were all men perverts no matter what time period?

“No, well. I too am a man so it's not like I don't understand how you all feel, but..... please leave obediently. I'm not an exhibitionist.”

“Goodness. Sir! Don't be like that. Even if we're standing as guards in a slave market, there are many things we are unable to do! Whenever a pretty lady walks around in the nude, all we can do is watch like statues while the thoughts, ‘So that's a woman’ and ‘So that's a hole’ goes through our heads. Is this what a person's life is supposed to be like? Yeah?”

“.....”

I was being told about a predicament that I never had any concern for.....

Truthfully, I wanted to ask why I should care.....

The soldiers continued whining with a distressed expression on their faces.

“There’s no place in this area to get any release, and it’s always standing, damn it. Prostitutes don’t do business here because they’re afraid that they’d be captured and turned into slaves. And even if we wanted to go to Pavia to let out our stress, we don’t have any spare time to go. Sir. No, boss! We aren’t asking if we can partake in it, we simply want to quietly watch on the side!”

I suddenly became the boss of these men who I was meeting for the first time.

I scratched the back of my head.

At that moment, something came up in my head. Lapis Lazuli’s face. As soon as I remembered the time that Lala had prevented me from killing the old lady and the maid, my mind slightly felt uneasy.

Should I do that? I’ll show some mercy here.

“.....Gentlemen. After hearing your stories I feel sorry and pity for you. Though I also feel a bit of scorn, that’s still humane so it’s fine. That’s why I’ll specially spare your lives. Okay? Let’s settle everything with this.”

“Pardon?”

“—Take care of them.”

I waved my hand.

The guards tilted their heads in confusion, and at that moment.

The witches that were on stand by above us quickly descended and hit the backs of the guards' necks. With an 'Ack!' all 5 men collapsed at the same time. The witches' movements were efficient.

The witches gracefully dismounted from their brooms. 11 of the elite witches, the Berbere Sisters all knelt down at once in perfect sync.

"Oh sacred and inviolable representative that symbolizes absolute dignity, member in an order of 72, who rules over all demons. The servants of Goddess Selene has received your great lordship's call and have presented ourselves."

"Glad to see you all. But Humbaba, have we not known each other for the past month now? Are you not being too ceremonious?"

I spoke facetiously towards the leading witch.

"I worry that your jaw will fall off every time you give that long-winded speech of yours about sacred and inviolable whatever. From now on just refer to me as lord and omit all that civility procedures."

"Ahaha. I understand, lord. If that's your order."

The head witch smiled broadly.

Her platinum blonde hair was tied into two pig tails and lightly flapped like a pair of bunny ears. I didn't know by what principle they were moving with, but it was charming. For someone who looked like that to be a skilled soldier who also partook in a massive war 3 times, that was a bit unfair.

"Now then, everyone has been gathered here, Lord! Please give us your command. As long as your lordship pays the appropriate amount, we will even cut off our hair and weave it into silk."

It was a saying in the demon world that meant that they will be liberal with their humble services.

I pulled Laura De Farnese closer to me.

“Turn this place into Hell.”

“Aha? By ‘Hell’, does your lordship mean?”

“I can smell a scent somewhere. It is the smell of fat emanating from disgusting masses of flesh. It is the smell of greed and hypocrisy.”

Matching the rhythm, I spoke festively.

“If they are pigs, then it would only be appropriate for them to behave like pigs and oink in a pigsty, and yet, why are they striding so boldly along the streets? What are you to do when these pigs are arrogantly trying to imitate people and shove their noses everywhere?”

“Naturally, you have to imprint onto them that they are pigs!”

The witches responded energetically.

“Only people can possess slaves. It seems those runts are arrogantly going against the moral of beasts and trying to handle slaves.”

“Please give us the order.”

The witches shouted together in one delighted voice.

“We shall make this place into a slaughterhouse tonight!”

“Yes. The command that I shall order is slaughter.”

I took a bag of coins from inside my coat and tossed it.

The head witch snatched the pouch containing 100 gold coins. She must have felt how heavy it was. A bright smile bloomed on the witch’s face.

“Slaughter those bastards without giving them the chance to even

scream. This is not murder. Do not let your conscience weigh down your heart and hesitation take over your hands. As you are lords of all creation, with the authority granted to you all by the Goddesses, slaughter these livestock for our extensive cause.”

“As you command, our lord!”

In a single stroke, the witches got back onto their brooms and flew upwards.

Massive fireballs then rose up into the sky and plummeted down over the slave market. The flames exploded and pillars of fire shot upwards. Humans screamed. The massacre has begun.

The soldiers panicked and tried to retaliate, but it was in vain. The only type of troops that could go against Aerial Mage Forces were the same Aerial Mage Force. It'd be a different matter if they had many archers, but the guards in the slave market mainly consisted of foot soldiers equipped with swords. What a shame. You cannot defeat witches that are flying in the sky with mere swords. Just obediently be slaughtered like animals.

The security forces quickly fell. Gunpowder rained down from the sky and the witches spread fire magic over it. The slave market instantly turned into a sea of flame.

“R-Run away! Get out of here!”

After the organized resistance forces were eliminated, everything else became nothing more than a turkey hunt. While laughing with joy, the witches killed the guards and civilians indiscriminately. Their faces were full of leisure. This was not a battle. As I had said before, it was a slaughter.

“It's over.....”

Laura De Farnese muttered.

With interested eyes, she was chasing the movements of the

witches in the sky. It seems she felt absolutely nothing for the civilians that were being slaughtered. Indeed, she was a human with a messed up head.

“I had read in an art of war manual that a single well-trained platoon of Aerial Mage Forces could win against an entire regiment of spearmen. After seeing it with this young lady’s own eyes, she understands. That it’s impossible for only infantrymen to defend against Aerial Demon Forces.”

“They’re the Berbere Sisters. One of the most elite troops in the demon world.”

“Berbere Sisters? Is that not the name of the unit that had a very active role in the Demon Lord’s forces during both the 7th and 5th Mercurian War?”

Oh, did she know of them?

Miss Farnese made an exclamation while staring up at the sky.

“To be able to see the elite troops that I’ve only seen in history books with my very own eyes..... This is quite inspiring. They are the living witnesses of history with over 250 years worth of tradition maintained inside of them. I wish to converse with them later on.”

“Uh..... If you act as my general then the Berbere Sister will soon be under your command.”

“What? Is that true!?”

Miss Farnese’s eyes shined brightly.

A very small light had returned to her dead fish eyes. Miss Farnese was clenching her small fists. It felt like a fan who was getting excited because they had just met their favorite idol.

“This is wonderful. No, this is quite wonderful! It’s an opportunity ask in person how people 250 years ago lived. All sorts of information

that you can't learn from books..... Ah, is that it!?"

Did she realize something?

Miss Farnese placed her hand on her chin and started to mutter seriously.

".....Demons usually live for hundreds of years. Just by that very fact they are no different from history books. If this young lady were to become the supreme commander, then she could use her authority to call for these demons whenever she wanted..... Is that so, is that what becomes possible. There was this kind of merit!"

It seems the Miss was able to find her own kind of charm from the position of general.

Mm. Although it sounded a bit absurd, the variety of meanings given from a job differed from person to person. I will not meddle in this matter.

"My lord! This young lady would like to know beforehand how much authority she will gain as an acting general."

Miss Farnese had spoken in an obviously bright voice.

I chose the exact words she wanted to hear.

"I'll be entrusting everything to you. The commandership, the judicial power within the troops, and even the authority over life and death, I shall gift this all to you."

"T-That's quite wonderful.....slurp."

Laura De Farnese wiped the drool from the side of her mouth.

At the moment, I could only see her as a simple pervert rather than a daughter of a duke's family.

It seems this Miss normally maintained her cold and calm attitude, but when the topic involved something in her field of interest, she lost

her mind.

Isn't this completely a history otaku.....? No, let's call her a history enthusiast. Consider Miss Farnese's dignity and honor.

"I shall pledge allegiance once more, my lord! Be it an acting general or anything else, leave it to this young lady. This young lady shall wipe out every last enemy that gets in your lordship's way. As long as milord bestows upon this young lady commandership and judicial power!"

Miss Farnese grabbed onto my hand.

As soon as she did so, a message popped up.

Laura De Farnese has been recruited as a subordinate.

The degree of loyalty will appear in Laura De Farnese's status.

Unstable loyalty. The other party purely regards you as a lord contractually. The other party can betray you at any time.

I smiled wryly.

After seeing the notice window appear at last, I became certain. That to this girl a grandiose position was of no importance. As long as it could satisfy her hobby or not. Only that could gain her interest.

That was fine.

A person with this sort of personality will not betray you unexpectedly. The contract was firm as long as the give and take principle was kept.

10 minutes since the slave market was turned into Hell.

Lapis Lazuli approached with 6 hired soldiers besides her. Despite the area around her being a sea of flame, Lala's face was still cold. I happily welcomed her.

"Ooh, Lala. My love. How did it go?"

"We set the guard post on fire and took care of the 36 'prey' that came running out of the main gate. There are no enemies that succeeded in escaping."

"Well done. On a slim chance, we can't have witnesses after all."

While the witches were terrorizing the slave market from above, Lapis Lazuli took the mercenaries to assault the guard post. You could call it a small-scale feint operation. In any case, we were able to successfully clean out the slave market.

"During the suppression, three friendly forces fell in battle. Regardless of that, your highness. Please introduce the lady that is besides your highness to this one."

"Ah, right. This is Miss Laura De Farnese that I told you about before. From now on, you shall help with domestic affairs, while Miss Farnese will help with my diplomatic affairs. I do hope that you two can cooperate together like a two-horse carriage."

"This one understands."

Lapis Lazuli lowered her head mechanically.

"This one's name is Lapis Lazuli. Born between a Humbaba succubus and a no named human, this one is a half-breed. As his highness Dantalian's grand chamberlain, this one holds the position of chamberlain and high steward. This one will be in your care."

"Mm. This young lady is Laura De Farnese. I may be a bit weird in the head whenever I see something related to history, but do take

care of me as well.”

Miss Farnese approached Lapis and put out her right hand.

Lapis Lazuli slightly creased her brows.

“This one apologizes, but this one is a half-breed peasant.”

An outcast was not allowed to come in contact with others.

It was an unwritten rule that was used by both humans and demons.

Despite that, Miss Farnese tilted her head side to side.

“Mm? Aah, it’s fine. It doesn’t matter. This young lady is also a love-child of a slave. I’m the daughter that was born when my father, the duke, raped my mother who was a slave. If you were to quibble about this young lady’s social status then it is not a bloodline that you can go anywhere bragging about, so please do not refuse.”

“.....”

Everyone became silent by the sudden bombshell.

She was a child born by a slave being raped? Were you telling me that she wasn’t an illegitimate child gained from a normal servant? As we looked at her with an astonished gaze, Miss Farnese uttered an ‘Ah’ and spoke.

“Oh right. What this young lady had just said is a secret. This young lady is known as the daughter of a servant publicly in order to maintain the House’s reputation. This young lady’s birth mother was poisoned the very day she was born. From then on a nanny took care of this young lady. That person is the one publicly known as this lady’s mother.”

“That’s information that wasn’t written on the report.....”

I spoke bitterly.

Even in <Dungeon Attack> that kind of secret wasn't revealed.

While we were abhorring the thought of how shady and dark aristocracy was, Miss Farnese took both of Lala's hands and shook them energetically.

"Since this young lady is the junior, please guide this young lady through many things. Is it fine to call you big sister Lazuli from now on?"

"..... It is fine to refer to this one by anything."

"Mm. Then I shall call you big sister. Big sister Lazuli."

Ooh.

Lapis Lazuli lowered her brows as if she was perplexed.

It was my first time seeing Lala be troubled by someone other than myself. It was somewhat amusing.

Hm? Lapis Lazuli gave a sideways glance towards my direction. She did not say anything out loud, but rather, moved her lips so that only I could understand.

'It seems your highness recruited a girl that's just like your highness.'

'No. I won't deny it, but I'm not as unruly as she is. I'm much more docile.'

If you got onto the level of Lala and I, then communication by only lip movements was possible.

'Is it this one that's misunderstanding the meaning of the word docile? Or does your highness have an arrow going through your highness' head?'

What.

‘This one is at her limit taking care of your highness alone. But for there to exist in the world another person who is similar to your highness? There’s a limit to nightmares. From now on, please take care of Miss Farnese yourself, your highness.’

‘.....’

That was strange. It felt like the way she was treating me was slowly getting worse.....

Did I really deserve to receive this sort of abuse from my vassal merely because I’d spend my time sleeping for 12 hours, sharing intimacy for 4 hours, and working for 8 hours everyday? No matter how you saw it, this was a diligent schedule. Lapis Lazuli was being too fastidious. This forever-on-her-period succubus.

Well, the plan itself ended without a hitch. We should start making our way back now. I succeeded in taking Laura De Farnese under my wing and got rid of all the witnesses. It was a happy ending.

“Your highness. Please wait a second.”

“Mm?”

It was right before I got on the backseat of a witch’s broom.

Lapis Lazuli had called for me and was pointing towards a certain direction. Wondering what the problem was, I looked towards the area she was pointing at and saw Giacomo Petrarch and the delightful bunch of guards sleeping there.

“There are still survivors. Please take care of them.”

“Aah. Those humans are fine. I left them alive on purpose.”

“On..... purpose?”

Lapis Lazuli tilted her head with a face that appeared as if she didn’t understand.

“This one apologizes, but this one is unable to grasp what your highness’ intentions are. Is there any other benefit your highness gains for leaving survivors?”

“There are no benefits. I’m merely leaving them alive because I want to.”

I smiled.

“That sleeping young man over there is Giacomo Petrarch. He’s a rather pure fellow that was dropped into this savage era. Those kinds of humans must live. They leave hope in this world like a blank sheet of paper.”

“.....”

At that moment, something strange happened.

Contrary to coming to an understanding like I expected her to come to, the doubt on Lapis Lazuli’s face had grown further.

“..... Then what about the other humans?”

“It was too pathetic to keep watching those fools, so I bestowed upon them mercy. They’re quite the lucky fellows. If they had behaved more unpleasantly then their heads would have flown off.”

I smirked.

Lapis Lazuli stared at me.

In her eyes that were as dark as the ocean depths, not even a single ounce of emotion could be seen.

Shortly after, Lala nodded.

“.....Is that so. This one understands. Miss Humbaba, please take Miss Farnese and the hired soldiers to the back entrance of the slave market and wait there.”

“Huh?”

Because Lapis Lazuli had suddenly given an order to the witches, the head witch asked back.

“Go to the back entrance first?”

“Yes. There is something that his highness and this one must discuss in private. Since other people cannot be allowed to overhear, please take responsibility and lead everyone away, Miss Humbaba.”

“Eeh. But our duty to escort his lordship.....”

“Do not worry. It will not take long.”

The head witch turned to look at me. Her eyes appeared as if they were asking me ‘Should we do as the succubus had ordered?’. I didn’t know exactly what was going on, but I took Lala’s side for now.

“Carry out the grand chamberlain’s order.”

Establishing a vassal’s authority in front of the other subordinates was important. There was nobody who would follow a king that disrespected his vassals.

The witches took to the night sky and flew off.

The only ones remaining in the ruins of the slave market was now just Lazuli and myself.

I tilted my head.

“What’s the problem all of a sudden? You didn’t even consult with me beforehand.”

“.....”

Lapis Lazuli didn’t respond.

It could have been my imagination, but her complexion looked like

it had become colder.

As her silence grew longer, the anxiety in my chest spread as well. It almost felt as if a caterpillar was slowly crawling over the surface of my heart.

I called out to her in a low voice.

“Lala?”

Silence again.

Instead of giving a response, Lapis Lazuli started to walk. It wasn't a fast pace. With slow, but very distinctive steps, she approached Giacomo Petrarch and the guards.

Shiiiiing

Lapis Lazuli unsheathed one of the guards' swords.

“Wait, Lala. What are you.....”

Without giving me the chance to stop her.

Lapis Lazuli swung the sword and stabbed into a guard's neck.

“What.....?”

The blade dug sharply into human flesh.

Lapis Lazuli did not stop there. After twisting the blade free, she immediately stabbed another guard. From a passed out state, the guards fell into an eternal slumber in an instant. By the time I could barely make out the situation that was happening before me, Lapis Lazuli had committed her third murder.

“What are you doing, Lazuli!?”

“Doing what must be done.”

“What must be done.....?”

Even for myself, who usually never fell into panic, I couldn't recover my senses as quickly in this situation.

“What does that mean? Explain it so I can understand!”

Despite having obviously heard my shout, Lapis Lazuli did not stop her sword. The sharp edge of the blade slit the throat of the fourth guard. Blood sprayed out like a fountain and covered Lala's white skin with dirty blood.

“You..... Stop right this instant!”

“This one apologizes, but this one cannot follow that order.”

“Lapis Lazuli, I am warning you. If you move even a single hair, if you ignore my order once more, I swear on Zeus! I will personally tear off your flesh!”

Schunk

After killing off the final guard.

Lapis Lazuli silently turned to look at me.

The blood stench silence weighed down heavily around us.

Unsure of what to say, my lips shook. I couldn't understand the other person's behaviour at all.

.....The plan had finished without a hitch. We had obtained a satisfying success. After covering up the incident here in the slave market as something another organization had done, we were going to leave casually. Subsequently to traversing across the continent and returning back to my Demon Lord castle, that was when the true

preparation for battle was going to begin. And everything following after that was going to go by beautifully.

But why.

“.....Why are you going against my orders? The operation is over. Everything is going smoothly just as planned. What are you discontent with? Why are you exercising this pointless slaughter?”

My voice shook because of the sense of betrayal.

The reason why I had spared these guards, who I originally planned to kill, was solely because I was being considerate of Lapis Lazuli. She disliked pointless killing. That's why I had gone against my own preference to barely bring out mercy.

And yet, why?

Lapis Lazuli opened her mouth.

“Your highness. Please stop messing around.”

“What did you say?”

“Pointless slaughter? Please explain to this one if any of these deaths are pointless.”

Lapis Lazuli gestured around herself.

Everything was set ablaze. The only things that remained standing were the iron frames of cages. Below those were corpses and piles of flesh burning in the inferno.

“Your highness had ordered for us to slaughter the guards, the civilians, and even the slaves without discrimination. The reason is clear. In order to not leave evidence of your highness' visit here.”

Lapis Lazuli gazed at me.

“Solely for that reason, 150 humans and 50 demons died tonight.

But to come this far and now want to spare 6 people? This one is unable to understand no matter how hard this one tries. So please, your highness, explain to this foolish one.”

“.....”

“Is there any pointless death here?”

A quiet question.

And at the same time, an endlessly cold comment.

“The lord Dantalian that this one had sworn loyalty to is a cold-hearted and ruthless individual. If by a rare chance he were to be threatened, his highness is thorough enough to not treat even the smallest of threats lightly. Where did that person go? Where did this one’s lord disappear to?”

“No. That’s not it. I was.....”

“Has your highness lost your vision? After the outbreak of the Black Death, did becoming one of the richest Demon Lords on the continent put your highness’ mind at ease? Your highness. Mercy and generosity is a privilege for only the strong. The weak does not have the right to show mercy. Has your highness Dantalian already become powerful?”

Lapis Lazuli spoke flatly in all respect.

With emotionless eyes.

She stared straight at me.

For some reason, that gaze froze my heart.

“Lala.....”

“This one shall list all of the strong people that she knows of. Rank 1st, Demon Lord Baal is powerful enough to start a massive war on his own. Rank 2nd, Demon Lord Agares is strong enough to

annihilate an entire army by himself. Rank 5th Demon Lord Marbas controls the political world, rank 8th Demon Lord Barbatos has immortal warriors loyal to her, and rank 9th Demon Lord Paimon has all the support from every citizen in the demon world. This one shall ask. What does your highness Dantalian have?”

I have gold.

I have nothing but gold.

“Your highness had promised this one that she’ll be able to enjoy to the fullest the greatest of authority. That is fine. This one will tell your highness clearly. The level of authority that your highness currently has is still at the very bottom. Lord Dantalian. Is your highness already pleased that your highness has become a person of power?”

I couldn’t answer.

“.....”

Lapis Lazuli turned her back and lifted the sword once more.

After killing all five of the guards, the only person remaining was Giacomo Petrarch.

The young man with a foolishly pure soul.

I forced my mouth to move.

“.....Lazuli. That’s not what I intended. I simply thought it’d be okay to show generosity every once in awhile. Is that not what you wanted from me?”

Lapis Lazuli stopped.

She turned her head to gaze at me.

Hoping to resolve the misunderstanding, I spoke.

“It’s true. Did you not stop me when I tried to kill your mother and

punish that maid? That's why I judged that you wouldn't dislike this."

"That is incorrect."

Lapis Lazuli shook her head.

"That is perfectly incorrect, Lord Dantalian. It seems your highness still does not know what kind of person this one is. This one is disappointed."

"Lala.....?"

"If your highness thinks that this one is similar to that of a middle-class maiden, then your highness is heavily mistaken. This one shall show your highness clearly what kind of person this one is."

Lapis Lazuli raised the sword high into the air.

And then.

Lapis Lazuli's affection went down by 1.

She swung down the blade.

The sword landed on the exact center of Giacomo Petrarch's neck. Again, Lapis Lazuli swung the blade. Once. Twice. The blade slashed down without end. Even though the person had already died instantly, Lapis Lazuli did not stop. Blood spurted out and drenched her body with blood.

"..... Stop."

Lapis Lazuli's affection went down by 1.

“Stop it, Lazuli.”

Lapis Lazuli's affection went down by 1.

“Is blood not getting on your face? You can stop now.....”

Lapis Lazuli's affection went down by 1.

Like a dog chasing its shadow.

She continued hacking away at the corpse.

Each time she did, it felt like a part of my mind was torn out.



I wonder how much time had passed.

Lapis Lazuli had ceased.

The sound effect that kept ringing like crazy a moment ago could no longer be heard.

Name: Lapis Lazuli

Stamina: Rank E

Power: Rank D

Defense: Rank F

Affection: 0

It was because Lapis Lazuli's affection had hit 0.

Because it had reached the point where it could drop no further, it had become quiet.

She bent down and picked something up.

It was Giacomo Petrarch's head.

"Please look, your highness."

Lapis Lazuli spoke.

"Remember the expression on this man's face. Remember the white of his eyes and his stupidly opened mouth. Look at his unsightly demise after dying by this one's hands so easily. If your highness ever forgets that your highness is still weak, then your highness will be forced to remember by someone else."

"....."

"Who that someone is could end up being Paimon or Barbatos. In that moment, the face that your highness will make will be no different to this man's face."

The flame burning brightly to the side reflected off of Lapis Lazuli.

The light illuminated her body and dropped a pitch black shadow on the other side of her.

She was the center point. With her in the middle, the light and shadow was split in half.

Lapis Lazuli stood upright in the exact center. Doing so, she was demanding for me to do the same.

“Please etch this moment into your highness’ brain.”

Withstanding a long moment of silence.

I was barely able to spit out my words.

“Lazuli.”

“Yes, your highness. Please speak.”

“You are a devilish woman.”

As if it was obvious.

Lapis Lazuli nodded.

A dark crimson drop of blood slid down her slender jaw and dripped.

“Until now, what did your highness consider this one to be?”



□ Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 20
Niflheim, Governor's Palace

Wax dripped down a candle.

It was night. The sky outside the window was already dark.

I spoke while gazing at the softly burning candle.

“I wonder what I had done wrong.”

“.....”

“While traveling through the air from Pavia to the Empire of Habsburg, and all the way to my castle in the Black Mountain, Lapis and I did not share a single word. My head was in turmoil.”

I raised my head.

Barbatos was seated on the sofa to the other side of myself.

Her brows were knitted in the shape of 八, and her lips were retracted as if she was going to say something, except, Barbatos was unable to utter a single word. At some point while listening to my story, she had forgotten about drinking alcohol and was only staring at my face.

At a loss for words.

Literally.

“I had definitely resolved myself. That if Lapis stepped out of line one more time, then I would show her her place. But once it actually happened..... be it rage or whatever, every emotion disappeared and left behind only confusion.”

What exactly was Lapis hoping for.

“It was because I couldn’t understand. Lapis stopped me when I had tried to kill the old lady. She had stopped me again when I tried to kill that maid. Is it not weird? Isn’t it? Barbatos, this is abnormal.”

I raised the corners of my mouth.

I intended to smile but my mouth ended up twitching instead.

To Barbatos, my current state must appear incredibly unseemly.

As it was proof that my emotion was escaping my control, I left it alone.

.....Right now, it was much better off like this.

“If she wished for me to be a ruthless villain. If Lapis’ request was for me to become a ruthless villain.....Then she would have left me alone. When I tried to kill that old hag and when I was about to kill that maid. It would have been right to have left me to do what I wanted in those moments. That way her actions would have made sense, right?

“.....That’s right.”

“Why did she request for me to show mercy at some times, and then request for me to be violent at others? What did she want from me? I started to become depressed whenever I thought about this.....”

I covered my eyes with my hand.

“Barbatos. Believe me. I intended to consider whatever Lapis requested of me. If Lapis asked of me to become a merciful and generous lord, then I would have seriously complied. If she asked of me to become a cruel tyrant, then I would have gladly accepted that as well. I was prepared. I was prepared to walk down that path with her. It’s true.”

“.....”

“However, I can’t be both. That’s impossible. Walking down 2 different paths at the same time is simply not possible. Then what other option remained? Hm? Move according to Lapis’ whim, was that the only option left?”

“.....”

“That’s impossible as well. That’s the most absurd action I could possibly take. Even I have a last line. To spare people when Lapis tells me to, to kill people when Lapis tells me to..... I cannot become a puppet like that for her. Never.”

That meant death for me.

With no doubt, the relationship between Lala and myself was collapsing.

Even after returning to my castle, we did not share a single conversation. Our shared bedroom life naturally disappeared as well.

In preparation for the army of 2,000 that was going to invade, we did make plans and arrangements, but that was it.

Words exchanged were kept at a minimum.

Technical and business-like conversations.

Excluding those, no other words were shared between us.

Time went by helplessly.

Barbatos spoke.

“.....Let’s rest a bit, Dantalian.”

The sneer and contempt that she showed initially was nowhere to be seen now.

There was a faint sorrow and clear hesitation left on her face.

The reason her sorrow was faint was because she was doing her best to not show sympathy for me, and the reason her hesitation was clear was because she was holding herself back from giving any rash advice. Just from that expression alone, I could tell that Barbatos was a good woman.

“Rest?”

“You idiot. It’s already night. You’ve been talking for several hours now. Your voice is cracked and your face looks as rotten as a corpse.”

I blankly took out a hand mirror and looked down at it.

As Barbatos had said, my face was drained like a zombie.

It seems I had excessively gotten immersed into my role.

“Right..... I guess we should rest a bit.”

“Don’t you have anything to drink?”

Barbatos shook the glass which was in her right hand. Her cup was empty. She grinned like an ill-natured child.

“Now that I think about it, isn’t this a funny fellow? Oi, Dantalian. I’ve been listening courteously to your love affairs for a while now, but you can’t even serve me proper alcohol? For a bastard who made a shit ton of money from selling black herbs, what’s with that? If you keep that up, you’re going to put people off.”

“Haha.”

She was probably nagging light-heartedly to shift the mood.

I could feel the small consideration coming from the other party.

Indeed, Barbatos is a good woman.

In this tedious life, consideration was like salt. No matter how awfully bland life was, if you added a little salt then it at least became somewhat appetizing. Barbatos knew how to utilize that **properly**.

“Of course, I knew you would come out like that.”

“Hmm. And what do you mean by that?”

“Wait a moment. I’ll bring something that you’ll surely like.”

I approached a corner of the reception room and took a bottle out of a cabinet. It was a wine bottle. After displaying the bottle to Barbatos with a ‘tadah’, her face froze immediately.

“D-Don’t tell me. That isn’t what I think it is, is it?”

Unlike her usual self, Barbatos’ words shook.

I grinned.

“The most famous region in the demon world to brew luxurious wine, Fire Spring Hell. Among the areas within that region, the highest quality bottle that’s only created once a year in the Count of Lava’s territory. Wine among wines. Made on the 1101st year of Balleleonium, it is wine that was brewed in commemoration of the 2nd Viet war. It’s the genuine product that has aged 400 years.”

“That’s ridiculous!”

Barbatos shouted.

“That’s high quality wine that even old man Baal has trouble getting his hands on!”

“I put in some effort.”

To be exact, I used Ivar Lodbrok’s effort.

This was a clear example that showed that having a pushover with many personal connections made life convenient.

“Goddesses, that’s insane! That’s genuine? That isn’t genuine, right!?”

Barbatos was already off the sofa at this point.

Demon Lord Barbatos’ love for wine was well-known.

She considered herself to be the greatest drinker, and the other Demon Lords recognized her as the strongest heavy drinker among them. To her, this wine was like a Holy Grail. Stripping off manners and dignity, she ran towards me.

“Give that to me!”

“Of course. Here.”

I tossed the bottle high into the air.

Lightly, as if I was playing with a ball.

“Kyaaaaaaaaak!?”

“Do well to catch it nicely on your own.”

“This crazy fucker—!?”

Barbatos instantly utilized magic to grab the bottle which was high in the air. From what I could comprehend, 3 layers of black magic activated at the same time.

First, Barbatos had stepped down onto the room floor and leaped more than 3 meters into the air. A black mist appeared in the empty space near the bottle and wrapped itself around it. Thanks to that, the descent of the bottle slowed down. Following after, an invisible hand grabbed hold of the wine.

If other mages were to witness this scene, then they most likely wouldn’t have been able to hold back their bewilderment. First reason, the fact that 3 layers of magic were activated at the same time. Second reason, the fact that 3 layers of magic succeeded in

activating without any chant or incantation whatsoever. And final reason, the fact that this great technique in magic was used merely to grab a single bottle of wine.

Sure, it was obvious that Barbatos didn't care about what other mages thought of her. Her everything was focused onto that '1101st year of Balleleonium'. The magic ability which she had trained and trained throughout the 500 years of her life, in this moment, was used for a glass bottle with a mere 10cm diameter. I wonder if even the Goddesses would be moved by her concentration.

Finally, the bottle came into her hands and she landed safely on the floor.

“Uaaaaaaaaah!”

Barbatos raised the bottle of wine into the air with both arms. Like a basketball player who had succeeded in getting a rebound shot in during a decisive moment.

In this moment, she was without a doubt, the ground ruler.

“Did you see that, fuck! This is the greatness of the fucking rank 8th Barbatos—!”

“Mm.”

I unconsciously sent her an applause.

“I'm not really sure, but it seems some amazing acrobatics happened.”

“Dantalian you son of a bitch!”

Barbatos glared at me fiercely.

“Swines like you don't have the right to even have a drop of this delicacy! How dare you throw this Balleleonium like some child's toy! Aaaaang!?”

It was amazing. For a person who barely looked 13 years old, a terrifying aura was coming off from her glare. If it weren't for the wine bottle being held desperately in her arms like a treasure, I may have really been scared. Yeah, really.

“For crying out loud! I really can't believe it. Wine that's aged 400 years! The brewer, using the most special magic in the world, a magic spell developed specifically for the purpose of preserving wine, would recast the spell every half month. This wine that was preserved through several generations just to barely become the finished product that it is now! For you to throw this wine that isn't even released in the markets, and only gifted to individuals that the archduke of Fire Spring personally judges to be the most noble and beautiful! To throw it like some son of a bitch! You bastard aren't even worth the same as the dirt on a crow's talon!”

I nodded my head.

“I became more certain of how severe of a drunkard you are.”

“I'm not a drunkard. I simply love to drink, you half-wit moron!”

While grinding her teeth, Barbatos looked down at the glass bottle. A black magical energy flowed out from her hands. She must have been checking if the wine was genuine or not through magic.

“!?”

Barbatos let out a gasp.

Her expression became as slim as the face in Edvard Munch's <The Scream>.

“Y-You..... If this isn't the real thing, then really, I won't leave you alone for the crime of deceiving.....”

“I'll let you have the first sip.”

“—!”

Barbatos hiccupped.

“But the very first sip..... t-tastes the best, you know?”

“That’s why I’m letting you have it.”

I gave her a big smile.

To her right now, I was an angel.

I probably appeared as radiant as a saint who had received word from the Gods.

“Are we not friends, Barbatos?”

“Dantalian.....”

Barbatos gazed this way with touched eyes.

“You might be a son of a bitch, but you’re a really good son of a bitch.”

“.....Although I’m considerably distressed on whether to take that as a compliment or not, but for the sake of politeness, I’ll receive it as a compliment.”

“T-This is not the time for that. Wine glass. Where did I leave my wine glass!?”

Barbatos swung her arm around frantically. Once she did, the glass cup that was rolling around on the carpet floor floated right into her hand. Barbatos gulped.

“G-Good, Balleleunium 1101. Show me the scent of your sensual skin.”

“Though I think the thing that’s sensual isn’t the wine, but the inside of your head.....”

“Shut up.”

Barbatos started chanting a spell. I can guarantee that out of all the magic spells I've witnessed up until now, this was the most inspiring out of them all. The reason behind this was because this was really an absolutely useless spell. This magic, as a cork-remover-spell, was being chanted by Barbatos purely for the sake of removing the cork. As she muttered the incantation of the spell, the cork slowly inched upwards, until finally, with a 'pop' the cork shot out.

Barbatos brought the opening of the bottle to the end of her nose and inhaled.

“.....”

Ah. That was the face of someone who had lost their mind.

It was like her consciousness had soared off 500 meters into the sky.

Despite not having even tasted the alcohol, Barbatos' face was already enveloped in bliss.

“S-So Heaven does exist.”

“As the very person who had gifted that to you, I'm quite happy that you're so pleased by the smell alone. Go ahead and drink it now.”

“Drink? This.....?”

Barbatos started to tremble with the wine bottle and glass cup in her hands.

“Dantalian, you don't know the value of this item. How could you drink a treasure? You don't drink treasures. You aren't supposed to.....”

“I thought you said you liked alcohol. The greatest alcohol is right there. Are you still not going to drink it?”

“Keuuk.....!”

Barbatos distorted her face in despair.

“What contradiction is this? Because I love alcohol more than anyone else, I desire for the Balleleunium. But because I love alcohol more than anyone else, even more so, I cannot drink the Balleleunium! A paradox! An agony! Is this what life was.....!?”

A little further and she'd discover the truth of the universe.

Her highness Barbatos' charisma was crumbling because of a single bottle of wine.

“Give it here. I'll just pour it myself.”

“O-Okay.”

Barbatos obediently passed the glass bottle to me.

Following drinking etiquette, I courteously poured the wine with one arm. With a very nervous complexion, Barbatos watched the glass cup be filled with the scarlet liquid. I seriously thought she'd have me executed if I spilled a single drop.

“Cheers.”

“Ch.....Cheers.”

Clink

A clear sound resonated as our glass cups collided. As I enjoyed the wine in a relaxed manner, Barbatos stared at me restlessly.

“I-Is it good?”

“Well, of course it's good.”

“How does it taste, hm? Describe it with as much detail as you can.”

“..... I don't know why you're asking me to do that when you can just drink it yourself.”

“Cause it’d be a waste.....”

I retract my previous statement.

Barbatos was a hopeless woman.

“Hoo haa. Hoo haa.”

Barbatos started breathing deeply. She even began muttering to herself that ‘this is nothing more than red wine’. I wonder if her muttering had an effect because her complexion became more relaxed. If I were to say something in my own personal point of view, I honestly thought she was crazy.

At last, Barbatos placed her glass on her lips and took a sip of the wine. Her eyes stayed closed for a long period of time. Then, her shoulders started to tremble and she suddenly burst into tears.

“Uwaah..... I did well to stay alive. It was hard times. It was difficult to live these 500 years, but, uwaah, I really did well to live this long.”

“.....Sure.”

Even I couldn’t help but be stunned by this situation.

Barbatos was sipping the wine while shedding warm tears. The surprising thing was, that while she was drinking, the process of taking in the fragrance of the wine through her nose, the process of rolling the wine on her tongue, etc, she devotedly made sure to completely perform all the tasting procedures. Although she was insane, she was rationally insane.

“Give it here.”

Barbatos instantly emptied her glass and forcefully took the bottle from me. Without being able to resist, I passed the bottle to her.

“Heueuk. Heuk, gulp.”

While crying.

“Uwaaaah.”

Pour another glass.

“It’s good. It’s so good, fuck.”

And cry again.

Quite the sincere scene was happening before me.

The image of a girl with the outer-appearance of a 12-year-old was bawling as she poured and drank alcohol. If you put it in good terms, it was surreal. If you put it in bad terms, she was considerably like a nut-case.

I spoke.

“Why are you making it unappetizing for others by cursing and drinking? I thought you said it was good.”

“Heueuk. As much as it’s delectable, each time you drink it, the same amount you drink is also disappearing from the total amount. That’s really, truly a fuck. Furthermore, people say that you can’t discuss this feeling with someone who had Balleleunium without shedding tears.”

It was a saying that made you seriously suspicious of the origin.....

Anyway, we succeeded in properly shifting the mood between us.

Originally, because of a Demon Lord’s constitution, it was possible to drink as much alcohol as possible and not get drunk. It was thanks to the mana circulating in our bodies that automatically cleaned out the intoxication. However, according to Barbatos, when ‘receiving’ Balleleunium, it was considered a great discourtesy to not get drunk by it. Barbatos had purposely stopped the mana circulation in her body and allowed herself to become intoxicated.

Alcoholics are quite terrifying.

“And so? What happened next?”

Barbatos spoke with a slight redness on her face. It seems she was tipsy at just the appropriate amount.

“After listening to your story, that wasn’t the point when you broke up, right? Then that means there’s another decisive moment. Coolly let everything out, kid. Since I was able to savor the taste of Balleleuniunium, I’ll take responsibility of you till the very end.”

“That’s quite thankful.”

I smiled bitterly.

“Shall we cheers first?”

“Ooh, Yeah. Cheers!”

As the toasts continued, it grew deeper in the night. Through the window of the reception room, an owl hooted. I was able to move my lips with more ease than before, and Barbatos chimed in with further enthusiasm.

“First, the army invaded my castle.”

“Hou, so the message was the real deal.”

“Aah. Although the number was a bit lacking compared to what was written.....”

With a ‘ding’.

The grandfather clock on the first floor of the governor’s palace rang dully.

Notifying everyone that it was midnight.



Laura De Farnese

Race
Human

Job
Slave (A+)

Reputation
Foremost Examinee

Leadership
Rank S

Might
Rank D

Intelligence
Rank A

Politics
Rank F

Charm
Rank S+

Technique
Rank A

Titles
Illegitimate Child,
Genius,
Psychopath.

Abilities
Bibliography S,
Musician A-,
Composer B.

Skills
Rapid Growth (A+)

[Achievements: 1]

Chapter Three

Inhumane Anthem

□ The Northern Guardian, Margrave of Rosenberg, Georg von Rosenberg

Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 15

Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle vicinity

“It appears the enemy has no outposts ahead, your lordship.”

“Mm. So it is according to the information from our spies. It seems there's nothing impressive about this Demon Lord named Dantalian.....”

I nodded after hearing the report from my subordinate.

Currently, my troops, the troops of the Margrave of Rosenberg were marching slowly. The destination was Demon Lord Dantalian's stronghold. Our advance was proceeding smoothly. The morale among the troops was high, and everyone's steps were light.

It was an abrupt dispatch, but they were all compliant. I was honestly grateful. A force of 1,500 soldiers were all obediently following orders from their superior without voicing any complaints. There was nothing as fulfilling as this for a person of great stature.

“Your lordship. Do you think it's true? The rumor that there's an endless supply of black herbs piled up in Demon Lord Dantalian's castle.....?”

“It doesn't matter if it's true or not. The important thing is the fact that that kind of rumor has widely spread throughout our land.”

The decisive reason for our dispatch was because of the Black Death.

This terrifying plague had instantly established itself as a

nightmare, reigning over all the people of the land. The friends and family that were fine yesterday would end up as cold corpses after a single night. It was terror itself.

Unfortunately, the people of my land were no different. Within a single month of the outbreak, 2,000 of my citizens had died.

Everyone trembled in fear of the plague, regardless of one's social status. According to a report from a tax collector, the population of a small mountain village had all perished. He had initially gone there to collect taxes, but ended up burying corpses instead. It was a disturbing story.....

"Insecurity and fear are at its peak for my subjects. If we were to stay still and take no action, then the public sentiment will be disturbed. If that were to happen, then there is the possibility that a revolt may occur as a result."

"A revolt....."

My adjutant's face stiffened.

He must have been surprised that I, the lord, would mention the possibility of a rebellion. My adjutant may have been competent, but his courage was a bit lacking. Would he relax if I smiled here?

"As far as things go, this is merely a hypothesis. Think about it yourself, what would my subjects do if their lord did nothing while their close friends and colleagues were dying? It would be difficult for my subjects to tolerate that."

"But that's irrational..... Is the Black Death not divine punishment from the gods? That's not something within your lordship's capability to handle."

"Be it divine punishment or anything else, it is the lord's duty to look after his subjects. If a lord were to run away from this situation, the only thing that awaits him or her is ruin."

“Your lordship.”

My adjutant looked at me with a gaze full of admiration.

Stop looking at me with those kind of eyes. Have I not said something obvious? This is quite troubling that youngsters these days are so easily moved by anything.

Or is it perhaps that I’ve gotten so old that I’m unable to keep up with their sensibility? This is depressing. The only things which increase through age are wrinkles and thigh fat. It would be nice to quickly go into a battlefield and die an honorable death.....

If I were to voice a complaint, then it would be the fact that there has been no war that felt like an actual war in these past few years. Something like a massive war was even more improbable due to the outbreak of the Black Death.

Thus, I had a substantial chance of dying, not on the rough grounds of a battlefield, but on top of a comfortable bed instead. In other words, a shameful death for a warrior. I wouldn’t have the honor to face my ancestors in the afterlife.....

“At the very least, the citizens must know that the higher-ups are not fooling around. Whether there are black herbs in the demon lord castle or not, that is a secondary issue. Showing them that we’re exerting our utmost effort in order to do something is what’s important.”

“I understand. That’s what politics are, huh.....”

“Mm.”

I nodded.

“The thing that we should be thankful for is that the main character of the rumor is Dantalian. It’s a relief that it’s the rank 71st Demon Lord.”

“A relief?”

That was so.

Suppose the rumor to have spread was that the one holding a monopoly over the black herb was the rank 8th Barbatos. It would be immensely difficult for my Margrave forces alone to assault Barbatos. Making use of the rumor politically would be impossible.

On the other hand, rank 71st Dantalian was a rookie.

He was on the level of an individual that you'd often forget about.

“We can bend Dantalian's neck whenever we so desire. Honestly, it's a waste to even call him a Demon Lord. He is simply a ricefish. Nothing more, and nothing less.”

According to the information we've gathered, Dantalian doesn't have a proper base and resides in a cave. He doesn't even have a single outpost as a rampart.

It would be fine to declare; subjugating Demon Lord Dantalian was as easy as breaking a child's wrist.

Thus, it was fortunate.

“We're able to dispatch our troops because our target is Dantalian. If it was Barbatos, then we wouldn't have been able to move an inch. We would have had to sit and wait patiently until my subjects start to riot. It is fortunate that the source of the rumor is Dantalian.....”

My adjutant marveled.

“After listening to your lordship's words, I understand that the Goddess of Fortune is indeed looking over your lordship.”

“Mm? Is that so?”

“Yes. Aren't the other domains so far away that it would be difficult to dispatch our troops even if we wanted to? But your lordship's

territory is comparatively closer to Dantalian's Demon Lord castle. No matter how big the empire is, only your lordship was given this opportunity!"

"That is luck. You can only rely on this sort of luck a few times in your entire life."

But I see. My adjutant has a point. Should I allow myself to be delighted that the Goddess presented me with this chance?

Bringing out my voice from my chest, I ordered.

"Soldiers, advance! There are only two days left until we arrive at Dantalian's stronghold. We shall obtain our spoils of war there!"

"Yes, your lordship!"

The commanding officers dispersed and spurred on the rest of the soldiers.

"Move quickly. Break time is over. Lift your dirty rears and march like ducks!"

The troops began to move busily. All the soldiers were equipped lightly. We had mobilized lightly equipped troops on purpose in order to end this battle as quickly as possible. It would also be difficult to transport provisions if we did not do this, so it was an obvious tactic.

I gazed up at the sky and muttered.

"The weather is nice."

The sun was hidden behind clouds. The wind was refreshing. It was the appropriate weather for marching. We will most likely go into battle in two days. Let us quickly sweep Dantalian's castle and put my land at ease.

☐ Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 15
Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle vicinity

The witches reported that an unknown army was approaching.

Their military strength, approximately 1,000 soldiers. An army that consisted of solely humans and no demons. According to the witches' assumptions, by the looks of the enemy's advancing rate, they were going to arrive soon.

"Did we discover them a bit too slowly.....?"

I muttered dejectedly.

We had spotted them late. The reason was simple. It was because we had no idea which location the invaders were going to advance from. The note told us that the invaders were going to appear around this time, however, it didn't tell us exactly who the invaders were and where they were going to attack from.

The result was this unpleasant situation. We had allowed the enemy forces to arrive right under our noses. It felt like I had become as blind as a bat. Fortunately, we at least had the witches doing reconnaissance from the sky, but if we didn't have the witches then how late would we have found them.....?

Game and reality were different. In a real-life war, there wasn't something like a map window that would kindly display, 'the enemy forces are approaching from this direction'. It was depressing. In the end, I had to go through the cumbersome task of searching for the attackers myself. It was the worst possible condition for a shut-in. Was there no magic spell that wiped out the opposition's forces in a single hit like in the game? Was there really nothing? I see.

I wanted to kill myself.....

Ever since the day I fought with Lazuli, I've been in a constant despondent mood. Everything in the world was tiresome.

Why was I still living my life? For someone who had already realized that their life was utter shit since the age of 6, why was I still alive. Am I a masochist?

.....Yes, I knew the truth. Because of my damn personality disorder, as long as I could achieve my goal, I was fine with even massacring children and elderly people. I did not feel a single bit of remorse from that. The very act of turning another person's life into a puppet and marionetting them to my desire was the joy of my life, and trampling arrogant fools then shoving them into a ditch was the fruit of my life. What was I supposed to do? When I was born, I was born like this.

Regardless, I did try to escape my fate once. After my father had died, I had given up on the inheritance and shut myself away. But for some reason, I fell back into a world that followed the law of the jungle. My life was in that shape and it had come back to this again.....

“Haaa—”

A sigh came out on its own.

It was already difficult to live life diligently, but for it to also be difficult to live life lazily? This was indeed my destiny. It was certainly fitting for a life that was utter crap. Everyone should just eat shit.

Laura De Farnese spoke.

“Lord, your complexion is unwell. Are you okay?”

The two of us were currently having a strategy meeting. She was probably concerned since I had abruptly let out a sigh in the middle of our meeting. I looked at Miss Farnese with hollowed eyes.

“Farnese. When life feels like shit, what do you do?”

“Mm? What are you talking about? Life has always been shit. Has your lordship, perhaps, ever felt like your life was something besides crap?”

Miss Farnese blinked at me and I raised my shoulders.

“Well..... not as of yet.”

“See. Your lordship sure says useless things. Referentially, this young lady thinks on an average of 2 times a day of wanting to kill herself. Suicidal impulses are already a part of this young lady’s life.”

“I’m a bit less than that. Around an average of 1.5 times a day, perhaps.”

“I knew it. Is that not similar to that of a normal person’s mentality? Do not worry about pointless things, lord. We’re already fated to swim in a ditch for the rest of our lives anyway. Nothing will change even if your lordship worries.”

“Mmm.”

I nodded slowly.

She was definitely right. Without a doubt, I too am thinking like her so I agree in a present progressive form. But why was I suffering from relapses of depression all of a sudden? I didn’t know what the issue was. Where did the problem start.....?

“..... My mood has become very spoiled. Oh Farnese. Seeing as it has come to this, I’ll have to relieve this stress by crushing the enemy. Let us quickly annihilate every last one of them.”

“Although this young lady doesn’t have any objections to that suggestion..... Lord? Acting on emotions is an extremely bad habit. Personal feelings only cause people to descend to 2nd rates.”

“I know that much as well. But what am I to do when I’m unable to improve my mood no matter what I do? I have no other choice

but to calm my anger by watching the faces of others in pain.”

I grumbled.

Miss Farnese nodded her head reluctantly.

“Well. This young lady only follows your lordship’s orders. However, if your lordship truly feels that displeased, then why not command the army yourself? Your lordship’s frustration may dissipate further if you were to watch those humans fall by your lordship’s own orders.”

“It’s fine. The goal of this battle is to awaken your potential. It would be of no use if we put the cart before the horse here.”

“Your lordship is rather stubborn in peculiar places.”

Laura De Farnese shook her head.

“This young lady shall warn your lordship for the final time. There is a chance that this young lady could get all of the troops, that your lordship had hired, annihilated. This young lady is unsure, but there’s the possibility of defeat even if the enemy has 1,000 soldiers while we have 3,000. Is your lordship still okay with leaving the command to such a lady?”

“Please stop worrying.”

I pressed down on the top of Miss Farnese’s head.

It was a weak spot of hers which I discovered during our time spent together, for the past couple of days.

Miss Farnese swung her arms and squirmed.

“Ah—, ah—. Lord, not the crown. I don’t like it there.”

“Listen carefully. It doesn’t matter if all the troops die. The thing this world is overflowing with are soldiers, anyway. If they die then hire new ones, and if they run out then raise more. Your lord has so

much gold that it might start rotting.”

“Ah— hoah, the crown is not alloowed.....”

Miss Farnese melted down to a pulp. She had a perplexed expression on her face as she turned into jelly. For someone who wasn't ticklish at all, she was a lady with a weird weak spot.

“However, you're an individual that is impossible to replace. A personnel that cannot be made no matter how much gold I pour in. Let me ask you here. Do I seem like a person who'd throw away an outstanding individual, who could carry out the task of 500,000 people in the future, just because I felt like losing 3,000 soldiers would be a waste?”

“Because this young lady lacks military experience.....”

“Damn it, be quiet. I don't recall giving you the permission to talk back. Just obediently be pressed by me.”

“Aak—, aak—, aak—. That's why the crown is cowardly.....”

Hoo.

Seeing Miss Farnese shrink down like this, a bit of my stress disappeared. Indeed I was a healthy sadist. An exemplary individual.

Good. I was able to moderately return back to my normal state. The usual me that was unconditionally correct.

Forget about Lapis Lazuli for now. Immediately deal with these bandits, these half-wit fools, who didn't know their place and were invading my territory of their own volition. Teach these fools what true etiquette is.

“De Farnese. Think of this place not as a battlefield, but as a playground. A small amount of 3,000 toys has been placed before you to play with at your own desire.”

“Hooah..... Toys, is it?”

“That is so. Treat the lives of these soldiers cheaply. Or simply consider them as mere dots on the map. Do you think I’d punish you for breaking some toys?”

On a normal occasion, I wouldn’t talk this frankly.

However, Laura De Farnese and I were similar. We were part of a set of people who were unexceptionably selfish. Limiting it to at least her, I had no inclination to watch my words.

The other party most likely thought the same.

“I understand. Then this young lady shall carry out your lordship’s order and **play a bout of soldiers.**”

Miss Farnese nodded her head.

“This young lady shall move the vanguard first.”

She moved the clay doll that was placed on the map.

The moment she placed the clay figure down with a ‘thud’.

—The battle commenced.

□ **The Northern Guardian, Margrave of Rosenberg, Georg von Rosenberg**
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 16
Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle vicinity

“Your lordship. The reconnaissance unit has returned.”

“The battle is going to start soon. Call me general, not lord.”

I sternly corrected my adjutant's mistake.

Becoming an excellent noble was difficult. In a standard occasion, you had to be immersed in social obligations while also taking care of domestic affairs. While in emergency situations, you had to take charge as the supreme commander in war. Magnanimity and leniency had to coexist with callousness.

Therefore, one's title was imperative. There was a spiritual energy in words. People could change freely depending on the name that was placed on them.

Currently, I was not the sovereign of the duchy of Rosenberg, but the commander of an army of one thousand soldiers. Not his lordship margrave, but a mere general. It was fine to call this the obstinacy of an old man. It was my creed that if one's name did not stand immediately, then everything else will collapse.

“Yes. My apologies, general. I shall correct my mistakes from now on.”

“Good. Give me the report from the reconnaissance team.”

“They reported that a unit of what is assumed to be the enemy, is blocking the path up ahead.”

“What's that?”

I opened my eyes wide.

“Are you telling me that Demon Lord Dantalian has troops under his command?”

“Yes. However, it is not certain.”

Not certain? That wasn't a pleasant phrase to hear. Vagueness was a foe of the military. One must speak with confidence.

“There were banners spotted at the enemy's campsite, but the scouts reported that their affiliation was unknown. It seems to be a unit mainly composed of dwarves.”

“A unit of dwarves from an unknown affiliation, is it.....? The numbers?”

“It is not an impressive amount, general. According to the report, at the very most, there are between 100 to 200 soldiers.”

“I will confirm this with my own eyes.”

With the mounted troops in tow, I made my way to the front of the army. Shortly after, I could see the enemy campsite stationed at the top of the hilly area. I narrowed my eyes and examined their camp.

“Mm, I see the reconnaissance team is doing their job properly. The enemy numbers do not reach 200.”

“That's what I think as well. Should we send a messenger to see what affiliation those troops belong to?”

I shook my head.

“There's no need. Excluding Dantalian, there are no other Demon Lords that reside in this region.”

“But in the small chance that it's a completely unrelated unit.....”

“I'm thankful for the advice, but I will have to turn it down. This

unit appeared to block our path on the exact day our forces were advancing. There are no coincidences here.”

Once I responded to him sternly, my adjutant nodded in understanding and backed off.

Anyway, my mind felt uneasy.

For the opposition to be stationed in that location meant that they knew of our invasion beforehand. Where could the information have leaked from.....

No, it wasn't too late to research this later on. Carelessness must be avoided. We must first get rid of the enemy forces before us.

“Adjutant, convey my command! Mobilize the cavalry and assault the enemy forces on both sides. Infantrymen, stay on standby.”

“Roger! Cavalry company, rush their flanks!”

My adjutant repeated my order in a loud voice. As soon as the command reached the other companies, the buglers blew their horns. A grand and valiant sound. This was the horn unique to the northern region of Habsburg. I loved this echo in battlefields.

My adjutant muttered.

“The enemy forces must be desperate as well. This might become a difficult battle.”

Was he showing sympathy for the foe? That would be troubling. Personal feelings were nothing more than luxury items with no meaning on a battlefield. I admonished him.

“But we too, have our own circumstances. Although I feel sorry for Dantalian, there's no other choice but for us to force him to be our scapegoat.”

“Of course.”

Hm. Was it unnecessary concern?

10 minutes since blowing the horn.

My adjutant spoke with a troubled expression on his face.

“.....General. The enemies aren’t retaliating?”

“Mmm.”

My face wasn’t much different from my adjutant. Honestly, I was confused.

Currently, our light cavalry were firing from atop the hill. With crossbows, they were shooting bolts down at the enemy troops.

The enemy forces’ bleeding must have been getting severe, and yet they did not budge an inch. What was going on?

“Maybe they have some other plot in mind.....?”

“Their intentions are unknown.”

I creased my brows.

“If they keep that up then only their casualty will increase.”

“There’s no movements at all, general. Maybe they’re receiving less injuries than we think they are?”

“No. There’s a very small chance of that actually being so.”

Of course, the range and power of crossbows used by cavalries were weaker than the ones used by infantrymen. But they were still crossbows. The concept of absorbing the magical energy from the surroundings to shoot a powerful bolt was still the same. You couldn’t

treat this lightly. It's certainly supposed to be that way, but.....

“General, there's the chance of an ambush.”

“On this vast open hill? There are no forests nearby. If they were to hide their troops, then where would they possibly hide them?”

“.....”

My adjutant shut his mouth. The distraught expression on his face was apparent.

I didn't feel the need to reproach him. My adjutant most likely knew full well that there wasn't something like an ambush. It was just that he couldn't understand the behavior of the enemy troops and was simply voicing his 'Perhaps?'

“That, well, they seem to be an elite unit. They've been under fire for the past 10 minutes, but there are still no signs of movement. General, they aren't a ragtag group of soldiers.”

“..... That only brings up further questions.”

“..... That is true.”

The enemy forces were receiving a one-sided shower of arrows and yet they stayed adamant.

Their troops were less than 200. No matter how many crossbows they had, it most definitely wouldn't be over 100.

On the other hand, we had 400 sentries. 400 soldiers that would fire in turn, allowing an endless stream of bolts to be shot. They weren't even worthy as an opponent. A fight between an adult and a child would probably be more vigorous than this.

Despite that, their infantry continued to maintain their ranks. They kept their chins high, as if their comrades falling by arrows besides them was a trifling matter. Their courage was abnormal.

“Normally, we’d compliment them for their impressive military discipline.....”

“.....Is this not sad? What makes these men any different from a meat shield?”

“Yes. This is truly pitiful.”

My adjutant raised his voice in agreement.

We watched the battlefield in silence for a while.

Finally, after 20 minutes into the battle, my adjutant couldn’t contain his anger any longer.

“I am unable to understand!”

His face was a bright red.

He was most likely raging at the unknown enemy commander’s incompetence.

“What exactly is their commander doing?! Their soldiers are dying. Retaliate, turn the tides of the battle, do something! At the very least they should surrender.....!”

In the end.

Around the 30 minute mark since the battle began, the enemy forces were finally defeated.

Unable to withstand the injuries any longer, their ranks fell apart. The sturdy wall had collapsed.

“..... Give the order to charge.”

“..... Yes, general.”

Both the general giving the order and the adjutant receiving the order were worn out. But, the only ones swallowed up by this somber

mood was us two. Our troops were obviously enthusiastic by the easy victory.

Buuuuuu—

The sound of horns resonated.

Receiving the signal, our troops unsheathed their blades and boldly rushed forwards towards the enemy's broken ranks.

It ended with that.

Unable to withstand our charge, the enemy soldiers quickly collapsed. The dwarves ran away left and right. Because of the much too obvious sequence, and the much too obvious result, the strength in my shoulders disappeared.....

“General. Should we give the order to pursue?”

“Do it..... I truly can't understand any of this.”

The enemy soldiers, unable to have run far, were swept away by our forces. Disturbing screams began to echo throughout the hills. My adjutant narrowed his eyes. It was a gruesome scene.....

“What was that battle just now?”

“I'd like to ask that as much as you do.”

There were many mysteries in the world.

□ Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 16
Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle vicinity

“—I see. I've come to a realization.”

Laura De Farnese's eyes sparkled.

“Infantrymen alone are not enough to beat cavalries!”

“Why are you realizing something that's obvious!?”

I shouted with all my strength.

Steaming with anger, I firmly pressed down on the crown of this lady's head.

“Ah—, ah—. I dislike it, lord. I dislike it there.”

“What was that battle just now? Was it not completely lackluster!?”

“Hoah—. That's why this young lady requested for your lordship to not leave the command to this young lady.....”

Miss Farnese spread out like a rice cake under my arm.

Even if a person had absolutely no experience in war, that battle just now was terrible. There was no end to how horrible it was. We had lost a company of 150 infantrymen in a blink of an eye, without having been able to do anything in return.

“You disgrace. I retract my previous statement. We are not in the same category of people. You aren't like my little sister, either. You are nothing more than my personal stress ball.”

“What's the difference between that and a sex slave, lord.....?”

“At the very least, sex slave are able to resolve their sexual desires,

but you are unable to resolve anything. That's the tremendous difference. You useless thing."

"This young lady abruptly became a girl lower than a sex slave....."

Miss Farnese became sullen.

In that last battle, the amount of soldiers that succeeded in escaping did not even reach 20. That meant that 9/10 of the total troops we had sent out had died.

With Miss Farnese, I had to watch that miserably lackluster scene from start to finish, while riding on one of the witch's broom. It felt like I was being forced to watch a B-rated movie.

"Mm. But this is entirely your lordship's responsibility."

"Say that again?"

"Since this young lady has only read art of war manuals, it is obvious that this lady would be unfamiliar to real battle. In one of the art of war manuals this young lady had read, it was written that infantry were enough to oppose light cavalry. So there was no other choice but for this young lady to verify which books were correct."

She was rather shameless for a person who had executed the worst battle in history.

I glanced at Miss Farnese with sullen eyes.

"So? Your true intention?"

"—Since it felt like I'd lose my first battle anyway, this young lady threw out 150 people as disposables to die."

"I shall knead that loser mentality of yours."

Press press press

"Ah, ah ah— I'm being kneaded, looord— Hoah. This young lady is

being kneaded.....”

“Try with a bit more enthusiasm. Do you understand? Victory is a maiden. She only smiles upon the bravest of challengers. Victory stays distant from fools that quietly stay huddled in a corner.”

“The bravest of challengers, is it.....?”

Miss Farnese gazed up at me.

I sincerely met her gaze with my own.

“That is so. Boldly act recklessly.”

“Recklessly.....”

“So daring that it makes you contemplate on whether what you’re doing is truly okay.”

“Daring.....”

I wonder if my sincerity got across to her.

Laura De Farnese went into deep thought for a moment before nodding her head. It was a small movement, but there was a certain resolution within it. Since it was I, who was gifted in reading people’s psychology, that was saying this, it was certain.

“Understood. It is surely as your lordship has said. This young lady may have been somewhat half-hearted. Because it was this young lady’s first time, because it was an unknown territory, this young lady may have been cautious.”

“Mm.”

“In truth, the first time is the moment when one can test the amount of privilege they have. Even if a child were to fall down, there is no person who would blame them for doing so. Although this young lady may be the greatest genius in the world, this young lady is still a mere infant in regards to military affairs. There is no reason to

take care of this lady's pride here.”

“Mm.....”

“That’s why, this young lady shall follow your lordship’s advice and overturn that way of thinking. This young lady shall even force the enemies to be shocked. It’s fine to have expectations. Swearing on this young lady’s name, Laura De Farnese, this lady will not disappoint your lordship.”

“Though it feels like modesty and self-pride were chaotically mixed together in that speech, whatever. That’s precisely the spirit, Laura De Farnese! Did I not assure you that it was fine to use up our soldiers as you please? I shall bear the responsibilities and the losses, while you take the glory and victory. That way there is no lucrative business.”

“As you command. My lord.”

Miss Farnese grabbed a clay doll.

“This is this young lady’s **sincerity**.”

With a ‘thud’, she placed the clay figure on the center of the map.

□ The Northern Guardian, Margrave of Rosenberg, Georg von Rosenberg
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 16
Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle vicinity

“General. Another corp of enemy troops has appeared in the front.”

“What?”

I furrowed my brows because of my adjutant's report.

After obtaining our incomprehensible victory from this morning —I may have gone through a countless number of battlefields in my life, but this was the first time I've ever obtained an 'incomprehensible victory' instead of an 'incomprehensible defeat'— our troops reorganized their ranks and were marching again.

Normally, it would be appropriate to allow my soldiers to rest after a battle. The fatigue military personnel received while engaging in a battlefield was unimaginable. It was an obvious consideration.

However, this time I was unable to allow them such leisure. The reason was simple. My voice of reason and common sense fused together and declared that 'that' could not possibly be considered as a battle. Since there was no combat there was no rest. There was no hole in my logic.

But for the enemy troops to appear again? What was he talking about?

“Give me the full details, adjutant.”

“Yes. It is estimated that the number of enemy soldiers is approximately around 150 this time as well. They seem to be in a battle formation on top of a relatively tall hill.”

“.....Why wasn't this unit with the troops we 'clashed' with this morning?”

“My apologies, but I am uncertain of that as well.”

My adjutant was as confused as I was. It would be difficult to expect a proper answer here.

With the cavalry following behind me, I made my way to the front. And sure enough, another unit of enemy forces lay ahead. Flags from an unknown affiliation were waving once more.

However, there was something decisively different about these soldiers compared to the troops we faced this morning.

“Adjutant. Don’t tell me that’s.....”

“.....Yes. General. After seeing it with my own eyes, I’ve come to the realization as well.

My adjutant murmured.

“That company, has **nothing but** crossbowmen.”

“.....”

My vision felt faint.

In truth, this was an outrageous group.

It was my first time seeing a unit like this in my entire life.

Typically, an infantry unit consisted of spearmen and crossbowmen. It wasn’t like that for no reason. There was a rationale for all of this.

The spearmen used their long spears to prevent the other side’s troops from approaching. When the time came, they would keep their spear heads extended out to prevent things like cavalry from charging in.

As what happened in this morning’s ‘clash’ —Yes, I plan to use this term persistently— my men did not rush in recklessly from the start.

It was because the enemy spearmen were standing their ranks without leaving a single gap. Thus, we had poured arrows down upon them from afar to force an opening in their ranks. The charge happened after that.

My adjutant spoke sourly.

“Though it seems they’ve set up wooden spikes around their position.....”

“Hmm.”

The enemy forces had put down wooden spikes around themselves like a fence, for anti-cavalry purposes. As if they were trying to make up for what they lacked. Certainly, those were effective in hindering our cavalry from approaching, but spikes were inferior to actual puncture wounds. It would be impossible to completely block off our cavalry with just that.

“Adjutant. Is that, perhaps, a popular strategy in battlefields nowadays? Since I’ve aged, I’ve been unable follow recent trends.”

“My apologies, general. If something like that was a trend, then the empire would have united the entire continent long time ago. And I would have lost my job and currently be unemployed.”

“Should we..... judge it as an original strategy?”

“You’re quite kind, general. If it were me, I’d express it as nonsense.”

Overcoming the generation gap, I was able to identify with my adjutant.....

At that moment, as if my adjutant had realized something, he opened his eyes wide.

“General. The enemy may be utilizing that kind of strategy involuntarily!”

“Involuntarily, you say?”

“Yes. This may be nothing more than my own speculation, but those soldiers over there must have been planning to meet up with the troops we clashed against this morning. They most likely intended to face us with these two units together. However, since their joining together was delayed, they ended up being defeated beforehand!”

“Hm.....”

It felt like my vision had brightened. That was certainly possible.

“I see. Was that what it was..... That would explain why the troops we faced this morning did not retaliate. They were waiting for their reinforcement to arrive.”

“That is so, general. And we had arrived before their troops could join forces. They probably didn’t expect we would advance so quickly. It must have been completely out of their prediction.”

“Surely.”

At last, everything made sense.

The ‘clash’ this morning was simply the enemy’s mistake. They were engaged before their forces could properly gather together. In conclusion, it resulted in their exceedingly eccentric and ridiculous defeat.

Certainly, the enemy soldiers this morning most likely didn’t have their commander present. At the time, they were probably earnestly waiting for their commander and reinforcements to arrive. But in the end, their commander wasn’t able to arrive on time and their entire unit ended up being annihilated.....

“This is all thanks to your insight, general! If you had organized our troops to mainly consist of heavy infantry and heavy cavalry, then our marching speed would have slowed down that much as well. We would have presumably arrived at the battlefield after the enemy

units had joined together.”

“Mm, that is just luck.”

“They say that if a coincidence happens twice then it is destiny. There is no doubt that the Goddesses are looking after you, general. Ooh, Goddess Athena’s blessing is upon us!”

My adjutant became excited and exclaimed.

Soldiers had the tendency to rely heavily on religion because of their rough experiences in the battlefield. There was nothing that could put more courage into troops than the knowledge that the Goddesses were on their side. That was why my adjutant, who knew of this fact, was shouting enthusiastically.

“Goddess Athena has given our lordship, Rosenberg, her divine protection!”

“What’s the matter?”

At the mention of the Goddess’ name, the other commanding officers gathered.

Once my adjutant energetically explained to them the situation, their faces also bloomed brightly.

“Congratulations, your lordship!”

“It is clear that the Goddesses desires to protect your lordship’s land from the Black Death!”

The other commanding officers gave their congratulations as if we had already obtained victory.

With a cold expression, I shook my head.

“Silence. It is too soon to be celebrating our victory when the enemy is still there before us. It wouldn’t be too late to share a toast after we’ve returned to our land.”

Although, I too was delighted, this was being hasty.

The battle wasn't over yet. The fight went on until we've defeated the enemy and returned back to our homes. Carelessness called upon an unforeseen ruin.

"You all, return to your units and organize the ranks! Stay on standby until the sound of the horn."

"Yes, general!"

The commanding officers responded promptly. They had immediately understood my intent. Indeed they were competent. Their wages weren't high for no reason. They were a reliable bunch of personnel.

"Adjutant. Give the order for the cavalry company to charge. Teach the enemy crossbowmen that something trivial like spikes are pointless resistance by leaping over them with our horses."

"I shall convey your command. We shall make sure to beat those bastard dwarves until their bottoms turn red."

After the sound of the horn, our cavalry rushed forward.

A portion of our cavalry were dismounted by the enemy's volley, but that was it.

Our troops skillfully avoided the wooden spikes and trampled the enemy forces.

'It's over.'

This content feeling took a load off of my mind.

With this, all of Demon Lord Dantalian's troops were exhausted.

Now there was no more obstacles to stop our advance.

Let us march with light steps.

□ Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 16
Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle vicinity

“I will knead you.”

“Hoack, ackack—ah, ah—, you can’t. You really caaan’t—”

“Yes. I certainly advised you to act recklessly. I also advised you to behave boldly. I admit this entirely. However, who told you to behave like an idiot!? That goes beyond being creative and is plainly dropping our forces into a pile of shit!”

“Ack—, to breathe down on the crown, that sort of cunning high level technique..... This young lady cannot hold on any longer..... this young laady, ah—, this young lady is being kneaded by her lord.....”

What was there to hide?

Following the 1st unit, the 2nd unit was cleanly wiped out as well. Each company had 150 soldiers. Miss Farnese had sent a total of 300 elite troops off into space in just a quarter of a day. Was this not an impressive ability?

“You could have just utilized our entire forces at once and ended it, but why did you send out small bits of 150 soldiers at a time!? Are you a masochist? Laura De Farnese, were you part of the group of people who received pleasure from pushing themselves into delicate situations? If you desire for pain that much, then I can personally show you Heaven. Aaang? Is it here? Is this your weak spot?”

“No..... any further, hoah—, reaaaaally.....”

Miss Farnese spread out completely like jelly.

Her blonde hair was messy like a rice cake. I stopped here.

After being a pulp for a long period of time, Laura De Farnese muttered.

“But this is strange. According to this young lady’s calculation, they should have at least been able to defend against the cavalry.”

“The thing that’s strange is your head. You idiot.”

“This is the first time this young lady has ever been called an idiot in her entire life. This young lady has always been curious as to how people, who were constantly called fools, felt like. But after being called it herself, it is incredibly depressing. I want to kill myself.....”

With a tearful expression, Miss Farnese fixed her hair and spoke.

“.....It seems the enemy cavalry were not riding normal horses but the improved breed of horses, warhorses.”

“Warhorses?”

“Mm. A breed that is born by cross breeding a centaur and a horse. This young lady has heard that compared to normal horses, warhorses do not fear edged objects or avoid flames. Referentially, although warhorses are considered to be the core of the Kingdom of Brittany’s militia, the enemy do not seem to be from there. Since it was written in a book this young lady had read that a Brittany warhorse was as large as an orc.”

“I couldn’t care less about your boast of knowledge. Show results. Results!”

I uttered.

“The thing that I scorn the most in the world is sacrifice without growth. Do not tell me that after 300 deaths, you were still unable to go through any growth?”

“How cheap. You even told me to treat them like toys.....”

“I meant that you should at least play within the realm of common sense that people can comprehend.”

Laura De Farnese stared straight at me.

“Lord, is it not fun?”

“Hm?”

“This young lady is having fun. It really feels like I’m playing as a sergeant.”

Miss Farnese spoke.

Although the focus in her emerald colored eyes was still hazy, there was a tint of more liveliness within them than usual.

“Honestly, this young lady was surprised. Your lordship had instructed this young lady to treat the lives of the soldiers like toys, but it was a question on if that was possible for this young lady. Separate to the absence of an organ called conscience within this young lady, this young lady still has an understanding of the concept of ethics and morality. This young lady believes that true joy comes from the euphoria of the brain. So the question was if this young lady’s body would accept an action that went against this young lady’s rationality as happiness.....”

Miss Farnese smiled faintly.

Truthfully, it was too ungainly to even be considered as a smile.

It was like a machine imitating a human, there was an absence of a soul.

A smile that merely followed the gesture of ‘raising the corners of your mouth’.

Despite that.

“—It was enjoyable beyond this young lady’s imagination.”

That was currently Laura De Farnese’s best.

“It was the complete opposite. Treating another person’s life like a toy is **the most interesting recreation in the entire world**. As much as when I read a historical book, no, it might have been more exciting than reading a historical book. It’s wonderful. This young lady has never felt like this before.....”

“.....”

I grinned.

With a soft touch, I patted Miss Farnese’s head.

“Indeed, you are the same as I, De Farnese. That emotion. Do you know what people call that pleasure?”

“No, I do not know.”

Miss Farnese shook her head.

“Please tell me, lord. Enlighten this ignorant young lady. What this eerily pleasant feeling is called. What does this young lady call this joy that feels like it’s oozing from this young lady’s heart and enveloping her chest?”

“Some people call it possessive instinct. Other people refer to it as a will to control. And slightly more intelligent individuals refer to it as the process of satisfying one’s own superiority. However, if I were to say it in **my language**, then it would be much more intuitive and is even a single word at that.”

“What would that be?”

“It’s authority.”

I stroked her cheek.

Laura De Farnese's expression became dazed as if she was struck by lightning.

“Authority.....”

“That is so. Authority, my companion. As it is the driving force behind the eternal bloodshed in our world, it is also my personal reason to keep living this damn life of mine.”

“Authority. Is your lordship living your life in order to enjoy authority to its fullest?”

I laughed.

If this was Lapis Lazuli, then she would have never asked this sort of question in the first place.

Because it was such a self-evident fact.

“Think about it, De Farnese. The smell of blood is rancid. The smell of internal organs is so disgusting that it makes you want to vomit. But despite all that, have you truly never considered why people still indulged in endless murder and slaughter? It is because the sweetness of authority is so blissful that it overwhelms the vile stench of blood.”

“.....”

“Aah. Of course. A person who has never had a proper taste of this particular delicacy are unable to understand. They truly cannot fathom it. Just like you, Farnese, who did not know of this feeling for the 16 years of your life.....”

Laura De Farnese was a love-child.

She had spent nearly her entire life confined in her room.

The place this girl escaped to within her abuse and captivity was the library.

She had protected her own ego by exiling herself into the world of

books.

The universe inside the books was soon her own universe.

In that process, the method of making facial expressions, the instinct of focusing one's eyes, and even the technique of raising and lowering one's voice, she had forgotten everything.

Essentially.

..... From a third person perspective, she was nothing more than a person who had failed tremendously in adjusting to the world.

In her perspective, it was the complete opposite, as all of her effort and sacrifice had gone into adjusting to her own world.

Laura De Farnese's infatuation with history was not a coincidence either. The inner desires she had, the impulse that should be simply referred to as her instinct, was reflected after being 'distorted once'.

Because every existing historical event was a **history of authority**.

Until now, Miss Farnese had lived her life unaware of what kind of person she originally was, and what sort of blood flowed through her veins.

"Do you not desire for more?"

Therefore.

The role I was given for this girl was already determined.

A devil tempting a pure maiden.

"Do you not desire more for what you've already tasted once? To once again control people, put people to death. Do you not desire to feel as if you are omnipotent?"

"....."

“You are a slave. But I will tell you what kind of slave you shall become from this point on. It is not something like a sex slave. Never would that be so. If you were to become a sex slave then you will have no other choice but to be chained down by me. De Farnese. You can only become a slave to authority.”

I passed my hand over Miss Farnese’s mouth.

Brushing the tips of my fingers over her soft lips.

“Any other type of slave will bind you down, but a slave to authority is different. Authority will set you free. If you wish to become the master of authority then the only path you can take is to become a slave of authority first! This is the land that freedom lives and breathes. Therefore, this is a kingdom where the slaves soon become the master, and masters become the slaves.”

I had presented a proper milestone to my still young junior.

Similar to the time that I had kindly taught this to my younger half-siblings.

..... Unfortunately, my siblings were not the same as me.

Regardless, I was certain that this girl in front of me was going to walk the same path which I had walked and was still walking.

Sure enough.

“..... Haa, aaah.”

Miss Farnese let out a breath.

It was a breath that contained the warmth of her heart.

“Lord. This young lady..... has never had her chest pound as much as this moment. This is strange. This young lady can much too clearly feel the truth in your lordship’s words. My heart keeps beating.....”

She was unable to show emotions well on her face.

But it did not matter. Her heated breaths were more proof than anything else of her sincerity.

One's expression was minor, anyway. Was Lapis Lazuli not always expressionless, and yet was more taken in by the desire for power than anyone else? Authority had leaped over emotions long ago, and was much too **deep** to express with one's face.

“Do you feel like you are alive?”

“Yes, lord. This young lady feels alive.....”

“Inscribe into your memory that you are the type of human who can only feel life from this. If you ever feel like things are going wrong, then look back at what kind of human you are. If you do not forget your root, then you will never stray from your path.....”

It was at the moment I was about to give her my last advice.

Someone's voice played in my head abruptly.

‘I'm sorry.’

‘What for?’

‘That's.....’

Huh.

Piece by piece, like the sound that resonated whenever a raindrop fell into water, each memory was quietly rippled by a voice.

‘That is not the problem.’

‘The real problem is something else.’

‘Does your highness not know?’

The wavelength spread out like a circle and slowly drifted away.

Eventually, different parts of my consciousness responded to it.

It was not only the voice, but her face, the gaze of her eyes, and the dynamics of each and every one of her words remained intact and played.

‘It is not a debate. It is a simple test.’

‘Your highness.’

‘..... Lord Dantalian.’

My God.

How could this be.

My mouth opened and my lips twitched.

My entire body was engulfed by currents because of the shock.

‘It seems your highness still does not know what kind of person this one is.’

‘..... This one is disappointed.’

‘Please etch this moment into your highness’ brain.’

Surely.

No, surely—

‘Lazuli.’

‘Yes, your highness. Please speak.’

‘You are a devilish woman.’

‘Until now, what did your highness consider this one to be?’

—Everything, became clear.

I became aware as to why Lapis Lazuli was angered and disappointed by me.

And I could only be appalled by the fact that I had figured this out so late. Are you telling me that I was a **fool**? Even though the answer was right before me, I couldn’t see it until now.

Oh my lord, good God, mother, father, my siblings, chicken hamburger, from Allah to Buddha.

I was an imbecile.

I was a driveling idiot and a mental bastard.

Now I was able to understand why Lapis Lazuli had behaved so unruly for such a lengthy period of time. It was obvious to have done so. It was obvious there was no other choice but to have done so. If Lapis Lazuli had behaved like I did, then I too would have been enraged!

I was crazy.

Seriously insane.

Why exactly have I stayed alive and not committed suicide? How would I possibly live in this world with such a substandard brain. It would only be appropriate to bite my tongue and kill myself. A 6-year-old child would probably be more intelligent than I was.

“Lord?”

My senses quickly returned by Miss Farnese’s call.

She was staring vacantly at me.

“Are you all right? Your lordship had stopped talking all of a sudden and started to tremble. If perhaps, your lordship desires to use the bathroom, then do not mind this young lady and go.”

Miss Farnese placed both of her hands on her chest.

It was over her heart.

“The words your lordship wish to convey to this young lady, has properly reached all the way here. In a small but distinct form..... This young lady won’t ever forget your lordship’s words till the day she dies.”

**Your devilish eloquence has captivated the other
party!**

Laura De Farnese’s affection went up by 24!

With startled eyes, I looked at her.

Honestly receiving my gaze— Laura De Farnese beamed brightly.

“That’s why, it’s fine to go and come back.”

Although it was still a clumsy imitation of a smile, her feelings were properly contained within it.

It was the first time since she was born that she had smiled on her own volition.

“Do not worry about the battle. The tests are over. Verifying which aspect of which art of war manual is correct, is complete. Now all this young lady has to do is simply apply this knowledge accordingly.”

“.....”

I slowly stood up.

Even after lifting myself up, I walked back and forth in my spot for a while. What I planned to do from now on was sorted out in my head. Miss Farnese was looking at me as if I was strange, but I was not concerned.

Since the contemplation was long, the decision was firm.

“I’ll be right back.”

In the end, I was not someone with an indecisive and hesitant personality. By nature, I despised that kind of behavior. Striking while the iron is hot had the best taste.

“Mm. It seems your lordship has the tendency to hold it in till the very end before using the bathroom. Take your time—.”

I could not hear the rest of what Miss Farnese had said. I was already making a mad dash back to my Demon Lord castle. Since our military headquarters was set up outside, I had to run for a fair amount of time before reaching the castle.

I wonder how much I had run. It was clear that I ran long enough

that it would be considered excessive for the pitiful stamina of a shut-in. Honestly, it would have been more convenient if I had asked one of the witches from the Berbere Sisters to give me a lift, but I had realized this fact later on. To be exact, I had realized this fact after I arrived in front of Lapis Lazuli's office in my castle.

Bang

"Lala!"

I slammed open the door.

Thankfully, Lapis Lazuli was in her office. Except, the timing wasn't that great. In truth, it was really bad. Lapis Lazuli was half nude and changing her black stockings. No, if anything, wasn't this a good timing? I'm not sure.

"....."

Lapis Lazuli looked this way and let out a small sigh.

"Your highness. Has this one not informed your highness many times before to knock on the door before entering this one's room?"

"Wait. Listen to what I have to say from there."

I took a deep breath.

Because I had run so recklessly, my chest was burning more than necessary. I wheezed roughly. A lot of time was needed before my breathing settled down. This was why I hated intensive exercise. It stole one's composure. I was always cool-headed and calm.

".....Surely, did your highness run all the way here? This is surprising. Until now, this one had always assumed that your highness only knew how to walk and lie down and no other body movements."

"Listen carefully, Lala."

I straightened my back.

And using both my hands, I utilized all kinds of gestures.

“What we need right now is dialogue. The need for us to reach mutual understanding through complex and delicate, but essential, dialogue is urgent. This is a very grave political matter, as well as it is a core issue more important than anything else.”

“.....Why is your highness behaving like that all of a sudden? Whenever your highness starts to imitate a weird way of speech, this one can't help but be seized by a strange anxiety.”

I raised my index finger.

“Unfortunately, our current situation is not very favorable. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that we are continuing to go downhill. A force of around one thousand enemy troops are approaching us by the hour, so we need to get something like politics off of our mind. That's why, I will only say it once. Since we are in various ways in a hectic situation, I will only say it once. Of course, our circumstances will improve from now on, and days where we are not as particularly busy may follow, but still only once. Do not ask for me to repeat myself. To me, this is an incredibly, frighteningly, immensely difficult decision, and thus, I will make clear that telling you this face to face is putting me under a terrible pressure.”

“Haah.”

Lapis Lazuli tilted her head.

She was dumbfounded with no expression on her face.

“Please speak.”

“I love you.”

Time stopped.

A pendulum clock ticked and tocked.

It felt like even air itself had stopped flowing.

After a long pause, Lapis Lazuli creased her brows.

“This one apologies, but this one is unable to understand.”

“I love you, Lapis.”

“.....”

At the moment she opened her mouth.

I clapped my hand in an exaggerated manner.

“Good. I said it twice. I was able to say it twice in the end. I had resolved and vowed and promised myself to say it only once, but I said it twice in the end. Good. That’s fine. This is still within my realm of prediction. There is no problem. Do not ask for me to repeat myself again. To me, this was an incredibly, frighteningly, immensely difficult decision, and thus, I will make clear that telling you this face to face was putting me under a terrible pressure. We can discuss the details later. I shall take my leave in order to take care of the enemy forces that have been approaching by the hour. If you look carefully, this isn’t exactly something that Demon Lords should be doing. Take care. Farewell. I’ll be leaving.”

Slam

I closed the door.

I curtly distorted my expression.

Silence flowed. The serenity of the inside of my castle had no bounds. The sound of water dripping from a stalactite could be heard somewhere. While maintaining my position of pressing my back against the door, I let out an ‘Mm’.

“That was perfect.”

It was indeed so.

□ Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 21
Niflheim, Governor's Palace

“.....”

Barbatos' expression slowly changed.

At first, it seems her brain was unable to comprehend what she had just heard. However, after 3 seconds, she slowly raised her eyebrows.

“.....Haa?”

“Love, Barbatos. I'm talking about love.”

I smiled.

Barbatos was still unable to understand my words.

With a grin spread over my face, I spoke in a joking manner.

“Think about it. This was a much too obvious issue. Why did I try to kill Lapis' mother? Hm?”

Since Barbatos did not respond, I asked again.

“Why I tried to kill Lapis' mother. If you use a little bit of your head then you can figure it out. Honestly, there is no benefit I could gain from killing that old hag. Nothing at all.”

I chuckled.

“A Demon Lord who had horrendously killed his lover's mother. How would people see me? They'd consider me as an insane nut-case murderer. Doing something like that is like dragging my name through the mud. Undoubtedly, I shouldn't kill her. Obviously.”

The moment one stripped off their own ignorance was this

delightful. Aah, it felt like I'd unintentionally start liking this world.

“However, I had tried to murder that old woman as if it was the most obvious thing in the world. If Lapis had not stopped me, then that old lady's insides would have been torn apart. What was the reason. Why did I try to carry out an act that wouldn't benefit me politically? There is only one answer. It is because I love Lapis Lazuli.....”

“.....Wait a second.”

Barbatos frowned.

“Stop getting excited on your own and wait a second. What, love? **You tried to kill that kid's mother because of love?** Dantalian. Did my ears hear this properly?”

“You heard correctly. It seems you have a great sense of hearing.”

“Fuck. How is that love?”

I smiled softly.

Right now, I was boundlessly tolerant towards life.

“It is a very articulate and simple principle, Barbatos. I had committed three acts that I normally would have never done if I was my usual self.”

First, I had tried to murder an old lady even though there was no merit.

Second, I had tried to kill a maid of the governor's palace even though there was, indeed, no gain. If I were to thoughtlessly kill a maid, then Demon Lord Dantalian's reputation would have deteriorated heavily. You couldn't possibly see it as a logical action.

Third, I had tried to spare the lives of Giacomo Petrarch and the guards, while bearing the danger of my massacre being found out.

This was truly nonsensical. Was I crazy? Why did I try to spare those fellows? It was simply because I wanted to show to Lapis Lazuli that 'I was capable of showing mercy '.

The first time was a whim.

The second time was a coincidence.

The third time was an inevitability.

And I was the foolish bastard who was unable to realize what that inevitable thing was. Twice was understandable, but for me to miss it for the third time? That was impossible.

My brain gave an answer following my level-headed personality.

Lapis Lazuli.

She was my **logical error**.

No different from a virus that caused errors.

“Honestly, it was incredibly obvious.....”

I blankly stared up at empty space.

“When I tried to kill that old woman, it didn't feel fun at all. Is it not surprising? To me, there is nothing more pleasurable than using my authority to drop someone into Hell. But for some reason, when I was going to murder that old hag, my mood was the worst.....”

It was the same with the maid as well.

It wasn't even slightly enjoyable.

Purely unpleasant rage had filled my chest.

I was the person who revelled when facing Paimon and Ivar Lodbrok in the Walpurgis Night. In a situation where if I had made one wrong move, I would have been in danger of falling into ruin,

and yet, I was pleasantly enjoying the feeling of toying with those two as much as I desired. I was someone who was **that** insane about authority.

But for me to feel displeased when I tried to remove the old woman and maid?

That was strange.

An error being involved was clear.

The clues were all given beforehand.

When I stepped on Ivar Lodbrok's head I felt satisfied—.

When I threatened the old lady and maid I felt displeased—.

The differences were simple.

The former was an action taken because of authority, while the latter were actions taken because of love.

If this wasn't a surprise, then I didn't know what it was.

Thinking back on it, it was this clear.

"I was truly astonished. To think the day that someone like myself would truly love someone would actually arrive. It's something that I couldn't predict even in my dreams, so I was unable to realize it sooner....."

"You..... Are you really saying that sincerely?"

"I am always sincere. Barbatos."

The other party's face became grim.

“.....Insane.”

“Who?”

“You. You’re completely insane.”

“That’s not anything new.”

I sipped my wine.

A bitter sweetness moistened my tongue.

Indeed, this wine befitted its title as best in the demon world by boasting its deep flavor.

‘Son.’

‘If you’re lucky then you will meet a good woman.’

‘No matter what you do. Never. Never let that woman go.’

Father, your words were right.

If you meet a remarkable girl then that feeling just comes to you.

However, the amount my father was correct was only up to that point.

Because decisively, I am more competent than my father.

I will now prove that here.

“What I had to do then was simple. First, I had to confess my love to Lapis. This, like I told you earlier, was achieved perfectly.”

“Perfectly.....?”

Barbatos’s expression distorted, but I ignored it.

“Next, I had to quickly clear away the invading army. This wasn’t

an easy task, since my goal was not to crush the enemy forces, but to raise my future acting general. Well, to a certain extent she had successfully awakened— to a degree. There are still many things left to teach her. Mm. Anyway, after suppressing the invaders, and kneading Miss Farnese to my taste.....”

I touched my chin.

“After that, I had to break up with Lapis.”

“.....”

A quiet stillness drifted.

“..... What?”

I laughed softly.

“Imagine it. Imagine her disappointment. How much Lapis was disappointed in me. A moment ago, I was earnestly advising Miss Farnese to become nothing other than a slave to authority, but right after that, in a blink of an eye, it was revealed that I was nothing more than a **slave to love**. That’s not right. That wouldn’t do.”

I slowly shook my index finger left and right.

“Lapis did not request love from me. Of course, we had rolled around on a bed together a bit, but well..... That wasn’t too important. I would have loved Lapis even if I was a eunuch.”

Barbatos gazed at me in a daze.

“Okay. I’ll speak honestly. I may have loved her a bit **less**. Sexual desire is rather important, after all. Additionally, living up to her name as a succubus, Lapis’ skill in that field is really..... wow, it’s unimaginable. Even though my involvement with women was on the disorderly side, it felt like I had suddenly become a virgin. I will admit it. Night activities had performed a fair duty of raising my love for her. But that was it. It was not essential. The language between us

went beyond body movement.”

“.....”

“Lapis’ only wish is to obtain absolute authority. But if I were to request for love, then she would occasionally have to submit. Like I had unintentionally done for Lapis..... when I met the old lady, the maid, and Giacomo Petrarch.”

I slowly shook my head.

“That would be ignoring Lapis’ wish and intentions, and it would also be overthrowing my own desire. Because.....”

I smiled.

“—I loved authority more than I did Lapis.”

Barbatos shut her mouth.

Gazing at her gently, I added.

“If I were to make a rough guess, then well. Lapis would be at third.”

“The third what.....?”

“I’m talking about the sequence of love. The order of priority in one’s life. A person must know what’s important and what’s less important to them. If you tried to take both this and that, then you’ll end up being the lion that lost both the rabbit and the deer.”

I slightly furrowed my brows.

“Then one’s life will chaotically fall apart. Should I call it fragile? At the very least, if you’re faced with a crucial choice, then you need to know beforehand what you’re going to pick. Mm. In my case, the very first on my list of what’s important to me is a life where you can be a bit **lazy**, and the second most important is authority. And now, Lapis Lazuli had become the third most precious thing to me.”

“.....”

“Is it not impressive? Laziness has been with me since I was 1-year-old. Authority has been with me since I was 6. As a matter of fact, these two have been my companions throughout my entire life. Despite that, the thing that I got along with for only half a year has taken the position of being the third most important thing in my life. If this isn't a miracle, then I don't know what this is.”

I pressed both of my hands against my chest.

The beat of my heart was conveyed to my palm.

I will never forget this emotion.

It was truly a marvelous and astonishing experience.

“That's, not love.”

Barbatos spoke.

I wonder if it was my imagination, but her voice was shaking.

“It's fine if you two break up, but love..... is an emotion that's more precious than anything else. It is something that other things should yield willingly to, to make way for.”

“Ah. That's what it's like for most people.”

I nodded my head—

“And most people are wrong.”

and grinned.

As I have done until now.

And as I will continue to do.

“I know the answer.”

Always.



□ The Northern Guardian, Margrave of Rosenberg, Georg von Rosenberg

Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 17

Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle vicinity

“Adjutant. Are there no more reports from the reconnaissance team?”

“There are none. Our front is completely clear, general.”

My adjutant responded with a delighted face.

It wasn't only my adjutant. The soldiers around me were all cheerful as well. Soon after, our forces safely arrived at Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle.

Initially, we were constantly cautious of our surroundings.

It was because after the hilly area, a vast forest was spread before us.

Contrary to hills, ambushes were more than possible within a forest. You could not eliminate the chances of an enemy ambush. To send out a small unit on purpose to be defeated, and then to aim an ambush at us while we were being careless..... In simpler terms, a standard deception tactic. Even if this was a thousand to one chance, I was not going to overlook the possibility of an ambush.

“Indeed, it seems the entirety of Dantalian's military forces was wiped out yesterday.”

“Yes. Although I was doubtful at first, it appears it was a pointless worry.”

After passing through the forest, a fairly massive rocky mountain laid in front of us.

Within sight was a barren mountain containing nothing but stone.

Vegetation was unable to grow on Demon Lord Castles mainly due to the excessively powerful magical energy that emitted from them. It was certain that the mountain before us was Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle.

“Our scouts found the entrance to the cave.”

“Mm, proceed with the plan.”

As we had previously arranged, a detached force entered the cave. It was a procedure to confirm whether if there were truly black herbs piled up inside the castle.

It was fine if there were actually no herbs. This was nothing more than action taken to show to my people that we weren't standing by idly. If there were herbs then it was good fortune, if there weren't then it wasn't a big deal. It was at that level.

3 hours later, the detached troops ended their search and returned. My adjutant gave me the report with an excited voice.

“General, they say that they've discovered 6 wagons worth of black herbs!”

“What!?”

It was a surprising result.

In utter disbelief, I stood up and walked forward, and sure enough, the detached troops were transporting the black herbs while rejoicing. Seeing the detached troops, all 1,500 of my soldiers cheered. It felt like it had become a festival.

Currently, black herbs were being sold for over 10 gold a piece in the empire. It was at least 10 gold! Depending on the region and market price, the asking price would even go up to 20 gold. Before I knew it, my mouth was hanging agape.

“Dear Lord. God Hades.....”

How much would 6 wagons worth of herbs cost? In total, there were probably around 7,000 plants. 70,000 gold..... The budget processed by the imperial family of the empire in a single year was about 500,000 gold. Thus meaning, I had obtained in my hand 1/7 of the national budget required to manage the entire empire annually!

“It is the greatest of success, your lordship!”

My adjutant shouted fervently.

“Now the territory of Rosenberg will survive. No, it isn’t on the level of just living! The people will venerate your lordship as a saint blessed by the Goddesses!”

“That is so. We can save all of my citizens who are suffering from this mysterious disease.....”

My chest swelled with delight.

How many of my subjects were in pain. How many people sent their prayers up to the Goddesses, and how many times did the Goddesses cruelly return to them silence.

Two of my grandchildren died from this illness. One of them was a child who was only 6-years-old.....

My chest throbbed at the memory of my grandchild’s blackened corpse. At that time, my daughter had held her child’s body while wailing in pain. A little bit more, if I had invaded this place a little sooner, then my daughter wouldn’t have had to lose her child.....

“Your lordship, what do you mean by saving all of the citizens?”

My adjutant questioned.

“Surely we should sell them at the proper price. Merely releasing this supply to the market would be enough to receive great praise from all of your subjects.”

“No. We shall provide the herb for all of those who are ill for free.”

I declared this after letting my emotions calm down.

Starting from my adjutant, all of my company commanders as well looked at me with shocked expressions on their faces.

“That’s unthinkable!”

“Good fortune has fallen upon myself twice during this expedition. The first was my territory being fortunately adjacent to Dantalian’s Demon Lord Castle. The second was that we were able to divide and conquer the enemy troops before they were able to join forces.”

The fact that we were able to obtain the spoils of war today was solely because the Goddess had allowed us to. You should not forget that.

“If the Goddess has bestowed upon me fortune, then my role is to bestow that fortune down onto my subjects. The glory from God must be glory for all. Is that not right, gentlemen?”

“.....”

My adjutant and company commanders glanced at one another.

Moments later, my adjutant earnestly lowered one knee and knelt down before me.

“This one has pledged allegiance to your lordship.”

The company commanders lowered their heads one by one. This wasn’t simply a body gesture done by soldiers to show politeness to their sovereign. Unrelated to a contractual relationship, this was a sign of respect between warriors. I personally raised each and every one of them to stand properly.

“Tell this to the rest of our soldiers. That every single military personnel here will equally be distributed a herb, and that once we

return to our land, I shall treat everyone to pork and beer.”

“Understood!”

If a noble such as myself were to receive respect, then in return, I had to gift them not with words, but with commodities. Anyone could show gratitude with words.

Words that drifted in empty space were like a rampart built out of air. The slightest wind could topple it down. Loyalty came from money. There was no reason to be ashamed to admit this.

“Then we shall move the powder kegs, your lordship.”

“Mm. Do that.”

“Yes. Transport the barrels!”

The soldiers carefully carried the powder kegs from the cart.

Since there was the danger of these exploding while being mishandled, 4 mages stuck to them and kept a close eye. It was obvious. If an accidental explosion were to occur, we would all be dead. Even the smallest amount of negligence was not allowed.

The mages had spent this entire expedition safeguarding the powder kegs. They could have been utilized as Aerial Mage Forces, but thankfully there wasn't a battle fierce enough that required for them to be sent out.

Mages. In other words, Aerial Mage Forces, were an incredibly valuable military strength. Only they could dominate the skies. It was fortunate that we didn't lose even a single mage in this expedition. Truly. There were many luxuries that could be considered as fortunate.....

“Your lordship, we have placed all the powder kegs within the cave.”

“Good. Detonate them carefully. Make sure to place your own safety at the highest priority.”

“Yes! Detonate the explosives!”

The mages aimed at the cave entrance and shot a fire elemental spell in sync. The maximum range of magic spells was 50 meters. The fireballs flew a reasonable distance away and exploded within the cave.

Boooooooooom—

The loud sound of a blast reverberated and shook the rocky mountain.

Gunpowder made from charcoal and potassium nitrate. And along with those, the barrel contained lumps of metal and stone as well. Although it was troubling to use in an actual battle, it was useful in bringing down enemy strongholds like this.

Dantalian’s Demon Lord Castle came down before my eyes. Albeit, it was impossible to bring down an entire mountain, so merely the cave entrance had collapsed. I was still satisfied with just that.

My adjutant let out a moved voice while watching the spectacle of the foot of a mountain collapsing.

“That’s amazing.”

It was indeed so. It was an expedition that was perfect from beginning to end.

Now it should be impossible for Demon Lord Dantalian to make a comeback. Not only did he lose all of his troops, but he had lost his stronghold as well. The margrave of Rosenberg’s security measures were thus completed.

There was no pitying emotion within me. This was the law of the jungle. It was obvious that humans would be hostile towards demons.

Obediently accept your defeat, oh weak Demon Lord.

“All troops! Let us return home!”

Buuuuuuu

The buglers, in the excess of mirth, blew the horns powerfully.

Receiving the refreshing midday sunlight, my soldiers moved with gusto. Since the wind was also blowing coolly, it was perfect.

Was that it. Was it already autumn.....

The leaves turned red and the farmers stepped out onto the fields. It was the season where all beings harvested their own lives.

Indeed, my life advancing through battlefields and arenas for more than 50 years was the same.

I wished to fall in a battlefield.

I wished to be laid to rest with the other warriors.

But.....

‘Thank you, Your Grace. Oh Great Gods. To allow this unworthy man the opportunity to leave something behind for his people within his lifetime. I could only be grateful.’

I gave a prayer to the gods within my mind.

If perhaps, after giving my people the cure, after saving my land, was I then allowed to slowly close my eyes. If that was my fate, then that too was not bad. Indeed, it was not bad.

It would be leaving behind hope for the new age and the new generation.

Was it not a remarkable final role given to an old man?

“General! The reconnaissance team has returned urgently!”

As I was contemplating how I would split the inheritance to my sons and daughter, my adjutant gave a report. His voice was rather high. For some reason, a perplexed complexion had taken over his face. The reconnaissance team? There shouldn't be anything worth reporting urgently at this point.

“What is it?”

“Enemy forces have appeared! Enemy troops have been spotted up ahead!”

At my adjutant's cry, the surrounding air became cold. I could sense that the soldiers around us were surprised and staring at the adjutant.

I too was shocked, but I had deliberately maintained a calm face. If the commander shook with anxiety, then that anxiety would instantly spread to all of the troops. In other words, it was a disease more terrifying than the Black Death.

Mm. It seems a change of ambience was required here.

“Be calm! Have you already forgotten? Our war does not end until we return home. As long as the battle is not over, the enemy can appear from anywhere! This is obvious. What reason is there to start a commotion!?”

“M-My apologies.”

Once my adjutant lowered his head, the troops that were about to be unsettled quickly held their breath. My adjutant had received the scolding in the other soldiers' stead. This as well, was an adjutant's crucial role.

“Give the report in more details. Tell me where the enemy forces are located and their approximate military strength.”

“Yes, general. The enemy forces are stationed on the hill area, which our troops had passed through yesterday. Their numbers reach approximately 3,000!”

“.....!”

I was barely able to restrain myself from opening my eyes wide.

The feeling of blood being drained out of my body engulfed me. The reason why I was able to maintain my composure was solely because I had spent my entire life in battlefields and arenas. If I did not have these experiences, then I would have most likely screamed in an unseemly manner.

“Did you say 3,000 just now?”

However, I was unable to completely control the urgency in my voice. The mood was bad. I could feel the dismay of the soldiers around me. I could even see the pale face of a company commander.....

“Yes. The reconnaissance team had clearly reported that it was 3,000.”

Be composed.

There was always the chance that the report was wrong.

I had gone through something like this in the past. After finding out the fact that the enemy force, who we were brutally fighting throughout the whole night, had a military strength 3 times smaller than our own, all tension in my chest had disappeared. A human's five senses were not always accurate. It was still too soon to fall into panic.

“Mm. That's rather hard to believe. For now, I shall give an order to all of the troops.”

I made sure to earnestly feign a composed attitude. These soldiers

had no other choice but to live their life looking up to me. Without an order, they would be anxious. Meaning, it was possible to erase anxiety with a command.

“We shall get out of these woods as fast as possible. All military personnel, advance while bearing in mind the chance of battle.”

“Yes, general! All soldiers! Advance at maximum speed! Advance forward at maximum speed—!”

Our forces quickly passed through the forest. Two hours later, our troops arrived at the hill region and witnessed a sight that was utterly unbelievable. On the other side of the hill, there truly were ranks of around 3,000 enemy soldiers sternly awaiting for our arrival.

“General.....”

My adjutant looked at me with a face as pale as marble. Our side’s military strength was approximately 1,400. Compared to the other side, we were smaller by 2 times. Which side would win was obvious. It was clear for the company commanders, and it was evident for the soldiers as well.....

Pull yourself together, Georg. Being able to feign ignorance even in this sort of situation is what a commander is. They must act as if they do not know the truth which everyone else clearly knows. Of course, it was a distressful role. But that was the only way I could take responsibility.

“Adjutant. Why do you think the enemy forces have appeared there?”

“Pardon?”

“If they had the military strength of 3,000 soldiers, then it would only be appropriate for them to have appeared sooner. They had plenty of opportunities to wipe us out. However, the enemy troops arrived after we had pillaged and destroyed their stronghold. No matter how you look at it, that is an abnormal usage of troops.”

“That..... is true, general.”

“All forces heed my words!”

I shouted while straining my neck.

All of the soldiers turned to look at me at once. This moment was important. This was the only opportunity I had to prevent their fighting spirit from collapsing. Let's bet the winning move on this.

“Those enemy soldiers before us have just now arrived on this battlefield! They desired to block us, but we were a step ahead. We had succeeded in bringing down their stronghold!”

It didn't matter if this was true or not. To instill vigor into my soldiers, that was my only goal.....

“Rather, return to them loud laughter instead. We have succeeded and they have failed. And above all, we have had sufficient rest so our stamina is firm. But since they have only now arrived on this battlefield, they are still tired! If we attack now then victory will be within our grasp!”

The soldiers stirred for a moment before eventually, their expressions started to become firm one person at a time. Good. Their fighting spirit was returning to their eyes. Let us go, my northern soldiers. The people await our return!

“Kick those stubby dwarf bastards on their rears! Beat their buttocks and abuse them! According to rumors, it's said that dwarves squeal like pigs when mating. Should us humans not kindly teach those livestock what true men are!?”

The soldiers responded with a roar. Instead of some high-sounding justifications, it was more effective at times to plainly hurl abuses at the enemy. We will not be pushed back in a fight of vigor.

“Blow the horns of Folles!”

Buuuuuu—

Buhuuuuu—

The sound of horns echoed through the vast hills. It was the noise that symbolized the outbreak of war since 700 years ago. That was so. The people of our land had won through 700 long years of history and were now here. We will not be defeated easily.

“All cavalry, charge!”

□ Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 17
Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle vicinity

5 minutes had passed since the start of the battle.

Although temporary, the current situation of the battle was neck and neck. The spirit of the enemy soldiers was rather impressive. However, there was something else that was a bit more impressive. It was Laura De Farnese's current condition.

"Miss Farnese, are you okay?"

"I'm fine. There's no problem with this young lady."

"But you're sweating quite a lot....."

Laura De Farnese has been sweating a tremendous amount since a while ago. I was worried that she was nervous, but thankfully that wasn't the case. It was a type of head heat. According to her, 'This always happens when this young lady strains her brain.', is what she told me.

"The morale in their cavalry regiment seems to be relatively high."

"A foolish choice. It would have been better if they had attempted to flee the moment they discovered our troops. Although they would suffer losses during the chase, at least 30 percent of them would have made it back alive."

Miss Farnese grinned.

Her smile was still awkward. The edges of her mouth were stiff and her lips were twitching. And yet, somehow it felt like that smile expressed Laura De Farnese more appropriately. At the very least, it was to my liking.

“But the enemy did not choose to run. As if it was the most obvious thing to do, they engaged in battle. Do you know the reason behind this, lord?”

“Probably because of the black herb.”

“That is correct. If they are able to return with the black herb, then they’ll be able to save their land. It would even be possible to receive praise from the people. The enemy forces are so ensnared in this delusion that they are unable to abandon their wagons.”

When before a tempting bait, a fish could by all means run away at any time, but they latched onto it anyway.

Was this not quite the splendid ability?

Miss Farnese had used the fantasy known as the black herbs as a way to pressure the enemy into combat. The enemy forces most likely did not even realize that they were fooled. They had literally become dim-witted fishes. Our trick had gone over big with them.

“Now then. Miss Farnese. Although up to here is remarkable, the enemy forces’ morale can not be trifled with. How do you plan to deal with this situation?”

“Simple. The reason their morale is high is because they are on the offensive. But this young lady is rather egocentric. This young lady cannot allow them to have the exhilarating role for long while on stage.”

Miss Farnese gripped the clay doll in her hand.

“—I shall slowly pressure them into a distressful role.”

▯ The Northern Guardian, Margrave of Rosenberg, Georg von Rosenberg

Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 17

Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle vicinity

“General! The enemy cavalry are going around!”

“What?”

I gazed at the other wing of the battlefield. My adjutant was right. A unit of the enemy cavalry was going a roundabout way around the hill and approaching us. I made a bitter face.

“Another foolish tactic..... If they had more cavalry in their reserve forces, then it would only be appropriate to have made them participate in the battle immediately. Why would they order something like a flank assault?”

There was no doubt that the enemy commander was a beginner in tactics.

Currently, a fierce battle between our and the enemy's mounted troops was taking place. Our fighting powers were considerably balanced.

If the enemy were to utilize their reserve forces in this situation, then ten to one we would lose. Our mounted troops would be annihilated, followed by our infantry. Our forces would be utterly defeated. Despite that, their commander had foolishly chosen to use their reserve troops like a detached force.

“Mmm. Does their commander not have an eye for seeing the flow of battle.....?”

In my position, I could only be grateful. If their forces rushed our flanks, then all we had to do was make our infantry block them. Merely extending our spears would be enough to keep their cavalry at

bay.

Although it was still going to be a tense battle, it was fine. Victory was still within our grasp. We had the ability to come out victorious. The Goddesses have not abandoned us!

“Infantry company on the right-wing. Ready your spears and spread an anti-cavalry wall. Show those men of reckless valor Hell and.....”

At that moment, something came into my vision.

The transportation wagons. The wagons loaded to the brim with black herbs were at our rear..... Surely, were they aiming for that!? Were they more desperate to secure their belongings than winning the battle immediately?

The enemy commander was an avaricious fellow. It was outrageous to be obsessed with money over one's own victory. But that greed had grabbed us by the ankle.....

I strongly bit my lip and gave an order.

“..... Focus military strength to the right-wing.”

“General, then our forces will be thin on both sides!”

My adjutant was startled.

“The enemy may be able to break through. Please reconsider!”

“Adjutant. They are aiming for our wagons. We cannot allow the herbs to be taken here.”

“.....!”

Those herbs were the future of our land. The life of our children. The hope to cure parents from despairing. Like we'd let these be taken back so easily!

“Quickly now. If the wagons are assaulted then everything will be over.”

“Yes, general! As you command!”

Once the flag signal was sent, our soldiers shifted their focus onto the right-wing. With this, the enemy commander should be discouraged from trying to pillage the wagons. Do not focus your eyes on something like loot and come at us fairly.

□ Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 17
Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle vicinity

“—War is truly quite enjoyable, lord.”

Miss Farnese hummed.

Currently, the enemy's morale was cut down by a level. Their aggressive behavior had slowly turned into passive behavior. The sharpness they showed at the outbreak of war had already disappeared somewhere.

“To think that freely controlling people to this young lady's will would give this much pleasure. This young lady can't hold it back. Although winning is possible by simply crushing the enemy's left-wing like this, but..... that would be tasteless.”

“What do you mean by tasteless?”

“Obviously, the taste of the dish. Dishes cooked with sincerity are what carries value. Would a dish handled with more haste than caution not be a discourtesy towards the guests?”

Miss Farnese spoke in a delighted voice.

Her face was glowing like a child who was absorbed in their play.

“This young lady wishes to manipulate a bit more. To brandish a bit more. To enjoy it a bit more. That is why this young lady will not do something tasteless like wiping out the enemy in an instant.”

“.....”

Surely.

Was that the inclination of the human called Farnese?

If it were me, I would not think like she did. If the opportunity to crush the other party appeared, then I made sure to tear them apart with no uncertain terms. Should I call it 'breaking at the onset'? No matter what it was, I enjoyed disposing of it immediately.

On the other hand, Miss Farnese was part of the faction that enjoyed things leisurely. By giving the other party hope followed by despair and then followed by hope once more, she desired to receive pleasure for as long as possible.

Well, to sum it up, if you were to say that I felt authority when I **saw myself** overwhelming the other party, then you could say that Laura De Farnese felt authority when **seeing the other party** despair because of her. Only the direction was different, but the desire for authority was all the same.

I let out a small laugh.

“You’re no different from a child who is completely excited over their new toy. That, once you get bored of it to a certain degree, you’ll end up beginning to handle things quickly like myself. Since now is the most enjoyable time, play as much as you wish.”

“Mm. Since it’ll be a long time until this young lady begins to tire of this, this young lady is fine for now.”

“I have clearly given you my warning.”

I knew that feeling very well, since there was a time I had gone through something similar to what this little lady was experiencing right now.

Even now, the memory of when I had secretly made 2 male students drop out of school, while I was the school president, was delightful.

However, doing something like that repetitively only made it dull.

Although humans grew tired of other people rather quickly, they

seldom grew tired of themselves. It was thanks to that principle that I was able to live this long..... Once 7 to 10 years pass, Miss Farnese will naturally come to realize this as well. Please do enjoy your golden days as much as possible.

Laura De Farnese watched the frontlines with eyes sparkling with anticipation.

“Ah—, don’t withdraw there. Please rebel against this young lady a bit more. Are you sirs not the valiant soldiers of the Empire of Habsburg? Redisplay the vigor that you’ve shown earlier and force this young lady into more hardship—. Try to rush at this young lady like miserable dogs and make this young lady into a mess—.”

.....Was this a sadist, or was this a masochist?

I was reassured since I had assumed she was a sadist, but she might unexpectedly be a masochist.

Was that it? When I pressed down onto the crown of Miss Farnese’s head, was the thing she felt not umbrage but pleasure instead? Did even I, who had the best discerning eye in the world, misjudge her personality? How fearsome. For a healthy sadist like myself, masochists were nothing more than an alien race which I couldn’t understand. It was quite troubling that there were so many unique perverts in the world.....

□ The Northern Guardian, Margrave of Rosenberg, Georg von Rosenberg

Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 17

Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle vicinity

.....The situation was not good. Our forces were slowly being pushed back.

Though I wished to do whatever possible in order to turn the tide of battle, we lacked the ability to do so. The enemy stubbornly came at us while aiming for our spoils. Our troops were tied down because of this.

“It's like our positions were swapped.....”

“Yes. It's as if they're the attackers and we're the defenders now. At this rate, we can't make any moves.”

My adjutant bit his lip. His expression was wretched. Our forces were unable to do this or that, and were instead being dragged around by the enemy.

Regardless, that wasn't the most distressful part. In truth, our soldiers were putting up a rather decent fight. That was the case if you at least judged it objectively. They overcame the 2 times difference in military strength and were fighting on equal terms with the enemy troops. This was most likely an impressive feat.

But slightly.

Ever so slightly, the sight of us being overpowered haunted me.

That was the feeling that was pressuring us into a bed of thorns.

Lament flowed from my lips.

“..... If our forces were on the offensive then many options would

be available to us. At the very least, if our troops were in a clear disadvantage then we could order a retreat.”

“But it’s difficult to decide on anything in this current situation, general.”

“That is so. It is problematic.”

Whether it be victory or defeat, a type of result had to clearly appear in order for us to respond accordingly. And yet, what was this current situation? It wasn’t this way or the other. Only the flow of our military strength being gnawed away ever so slowly continued on.....

I most likely should not order for a retreat in our current circumstances. Our men were currently facing the enemy desperately. The sole thing that was pushing our soldiers from behind was their hope. A little bit more. If they exerted a little bit more, then they may be able to win. This was the hope which was supporting them.

However, in truth, that ‘little bit’ never diminished below a point. The enemy forces tenaciously held the upper hand, and we were simply pulled along by them. The stamina of our troops was slowly reaching its limit.....

If I were to order for a retreat now, then at that moment is when our soldiers would truly fall into despair. Their fighting spirit would vanish instantly. That would be the end. Without being able to retreat properly, without being able to even obtain victory, our forces would disgracefully collapse on their own.

Drosera.

It felt like we were stuck on a patient sundew. An adhesive-like unpleasant feeling went down my spine. My mouth became dry. The feeling of being neither one thing nor the other, while also being dragged step by step to our destined demise..... this vastly agonizing feeling.

Was the enemy commander truly a beginner? Were we perhaps caught in a trap? It was a foolish thought, but I was unable to cast away my doubts.

In the first place, this kind of battle went against my preference. Wreak havoc like a storm and wipe them out. That was the ideal type of battle that I looked forward to. How did it become like this.....

“General. Perhaps this is the enemy’s stratagem?”

“A stratagem?”

My adjutant gazed this way with an apprehensive face.

“I’m referring to the two units that our troops suppressed yesterday. They may have purposely left those units as bait in order to lure us into being careless.”

“No. That’s impossible.”

I adamantly shook my head.

“If you add those two units together then that would be 300 soldiers. If you combined those soldiers with the enemy troops we’re currently facing, then they could have finished us off with ease. Why would they discard their chance of obtaining an easy victory?”

“That’s right, huh.....”

“Adding to that, we caved in their Demon Lord Castle. If perhaps, our current situation was indeed a trap, then that would be saying that they had allowed us to freely destroy their stronghold. The enemy would gain absolutely no benefit if this were true.”

There was no mistake. They would only experience losses.

Their black herbs were plundered and their Demon Lord Castle was destroyed. On a strategic level, the enemy forces have already lost. Even if they were to decimate us here, the enemy troops would be

unable to celebrate their victory. To have won the battle, but to have been utterly defeated strategically, that would be the conclusion of this war.

“.....I guess there is no other choice. Let us utilize the mages.”

“Yes. I as well think that there are no other methods left. If the Aerial Mage Force were to bombard the enemy from the skies with gunpowder, then our situation might turn for the better, even if it is by the smallest amount.”

The number of mages our forces currently possessed was 4. It was an excessively small number, but it was still enough to cause an impact on the enemy troops. Let us place our faith on this final card.

“General. The Aerial Mage Force have sorted in formation.”

My adjutant reported. Once I looked upwards, a group of mages soared through the sky while maintaining a height of 150 meters. Sweat formed on my palms..... Merely 4 mages. However, all 1,500 of our soldiers' lives were resting on their shoulders. No, if you considered the herbs loaded on the wagons, then the lives of 7,000 people in our land were on their shoulders as well!

I plead of you. Bring chaos onto the opposing forces!

You do not have to kill many of them. It would be sufficient to simply plant the fear that ‘Gunpowder and flame are falling from the sky’, into their hearts. A slight disorder. That alone would be enough to create a foundation in order to turn the tides of battle. The mages hastily rushed towards the frontlines. A bit further, a little bit further.....!

“G-General. Look over there.”

At that moment, my adjutant addressed me. It was a voice drenched in despair.

“It’s an Aerial Mage Force. The enemy troops have mobilized their

Aerial Mage Force as well.”

“What. That can’t be.....”

Possible. As I was about to finish my sentence, something came into my vision as well. On the other side, a group of hostile mages riding on brooms was approaching from the sky. They were mages with large conical hats worn on their heads.

“Do not tell me, witches.....?”

My entire body fell into shock.

Witches, who were granted eternal youth by devoting their souls to Demon Lords, boasted the highest level of proficiency. Furthermore, they were many in number. Compared to our mages, they overwhelmed us.

“Ten, no, there are eleven. General! The opposing side has a more staggering amount of mage personnel!”

“That’s not possible. Why are there witches there!?”

In the center of the sky, our mages clashed against theirs. In a blink of an eye, our mages were hunted down. As if they were playing with toys, the witches killed off our mages one individual at a time. That was not a battle. That was simply a slaughter.....

Our last remaining mage ran away frantically before he was finally shot down. As his limbs were severed, he let out a scream. The chunks of meat, which were broken into small pieces, fell from the sky and towards the ground. Then, the witches celebrated their carnage by spinning around in the sky. My adjutant and I became speechless by the horrendous sight we had just witnessed.

The witches returned to the enemy campsite as if they were living free from worldly cares. It almost felt like they had come out on a stroll and were heading back now.

My adjutant looked at me with a face as pale as a corpse.

“G-General.....”

“.....”

Think. Do not panic and concentrate, Georg!

Why did they send out their witches now? If they had sortied their witches at the start of battle, then they could have wiped us out with much ease. Why did they pull out their trump card now of all times? Is their goal not to eradicate us? What possible meaning could there be..... Wait, what if there was no meaning? What if having no significance was what represented their intentions.....?

I slowly opened my mouth.

“..... Raise the white flag. We are surrendering.”

“Pardon?”

“The enemy forces do not intend to face us seriously. They are slowly playing around with our troops, while waiting for us to wither away. They are treating us like toys.”

My jaws trembled because of this wretched emotion.

“They can demolish us whenever they so desire, however, they are not doing so. It’s because they planned to ridicule us from the very beginning.”

“That can’t be.....”

My adjutant’s face became stained in anguish. I did not have the energy to reproach my adjutant for making such an expression. The sense of defeat was stabbing my insides.

“If we were to continue the battle like so, the only thing that’d be left for us is eradication. The only difference is whether we desired to be wiped out sooner, or later. Raise the white flag, adjutant..... We

can only hope that they will show a touch of generosity towards us.....”

We sent an envoy to the enemy camp to inform them of our surrender.

It wasn't over with this. There was a chance that the enemy would not allow us to surrender. That they would continue to watch over us as we died while trembling in agony.

Then both retreat and surrender would become impossible. At that point, all that our soldiers could do was resolve themselves to die a dog's death and fight until the very end. And, as the enemy commander had hoped, we would cry out in pain as we fell into a living hell, until we finally died in battle. An unspeakable impotent feeling weighed heavily on my shoulders.....

Shortly after, our envoy returned.

Fortunately, it seems the enemy forces had accepted our surrender. Except, on certain conditions.

To leave behind the black herbs stolen from the Demon Lord Castle, to disarm ourselves, and to leave behind our military regiment's banners.

“Are they telling us to give up on our spoils, our arms, and our honor?”

These were not terms that could easily be accepted. If anything, this was one of the most humiliating types of surrender.

My adjutant's voice shook.

“General. These conditions are too severe. We should just fight until the very end instead.”

“Then what would remain? We will all perish, and the people of Rosenberg will be engulfed in chaos. We can only endure our

humiliation here.”

“But.”

“I will accept no arguments.”

The company commanders dropped their heads. The mood was heavy. It was the mood of people who had lost unjustifiably. It was unimaginable that we would arrive at this sort of situation. For them, and for myself.....

“Notify them that we will accept their conditions.”

“.....Yes.”

“Raise your heads. You all have done your best to follow me loyally. I am solely to blame for this defeat. You all have done nothing wrong.”

I pat the shoulder of my adjutant.

A soft voice, that even surprised me, had flowed from my lips.

“General.”

“Do not forget today’s humiliation. Moreover, today will not be the worst day of your lives. You will be able to go home after having barely survived and with your limbs attached. There is nothing more important than this for a soldier.”

The company commanders nodded their heads with difficulty.

These men have shown more than enough loyalty to their lord. It was difficult to find soldiers as faithful as them in the empire. Solely being able to send these soldiers back home alive was enough to not discourage me.

“Now then, let us go. This old man shall take the lead.”

“Yes, general.”

The battle was over.

Our troops advanced forward while in a column formation. We had left behind our weapons.

The majority of our soldiers refused to throw away their trivial weapons, such as daggers and knives, but there was no one who had an issue with this. We had discarded all of our crossbows and spears.

Our steps should have been as light as the amount of heavy equipment we had lost, but the atmosphere around our troops was heavy to no bounds. Everyone was silent.

The enemy's troops were spread out on both sides of the hill. It felt like a sea that was divided in half. They were most likely telling us to go by obediently. I grudgingly ground my teeth by this path guiding that felt like they were mocking us.

'One day I will get my revenge.'

I will thus give up upon the life of dying on my bed submissively.

Demon Lord Dantalian. Within my lifetime, swearing on my name, Georg von Rosenberg, I shall absolutely avenge myself for today's defeat. Ten times, no, I shall repay you by twenty times the amount and watch as you plea for forgiveness on the floor!

If I am determined, then I could gather ten thousand soldiers. It wasn't impossible to also request for assistance from the other margraves in the vicinity, and raise the troops up to twenty thousand. Eradicating something like a rank 71st Demon Lord was an effortless task.

Someday. Once the Black Death has calmed and my land has reached a certain point of stability, I shall return.

It was at that moment, while I was trudging forward with the remnant of my troops.

“.....?”

Something was caught in my line of sight. At the top of the hill. Thinking that I had seen wrong, I furrowed my brows and became speechless.

An angel was standing atop of the hill.

An indescribably beautiful girl was standing there. She was so charming that it made me, who was at the age where I should be preparing for death, think so as well. I stared at her vacantly before I quickly shook my head as if I was shuddering.

Calm down. There was no reason for an angel to be reflected in my eyes, right?

I was too stained with reality to believe that an angel could have suddenly descended down onto the earth. Let's just think of it as having seen an incredibly elegant girl.

“.....”

At that moment, the girl sent a modest greeting towards this direction. She slightly raised the edge of her coat and bent her waist. It was a style of greeting that was perfectly faithful to the ways of nobility.

‘Surely, that isn’t a greeting towards me?’

In order to examine the girl closely, I blinked my eyes several times.

And at the moment I looked again at the distant hill.

—I witnessed.





“.....”

A devil was smiling behind the girl.

Although I have never witnessed the existence known as the devil in my entire life, ‘what’ exactly people referred to when calling something the devil, I now understood in this moment.

“All.....”

Every single nerve in my body was sending warning signals to my brain.

That wasn’t allowed. That was something that shouldn’t be allowed to exist above ground.

Of course, it was a hallucination. Once I blinked again and gazed at the top of the hill once more, the angel-like girl had returned.

“All forces.....”

However, my instincts were screaming. The intuition that I’ve polished for 50 years was shouting with all it had. That it was dangerous, that remaining here for even one more second was tremendously dangerous. Following the intuition of mine that has saved my life countless of times, I opened my mouth.

“All forces..... retreat! This is a trap!”

And at the same time.

Thousands of arrows rained down from above the hill.

Screams resonated from all sides. Blood splattered. The once silent march of departure had instantly become a living hell. Left and right, the enemy troops that were split in half were firing their crossbows without end. Our troops, who had left behind their weapons, could not even consider the option of resisting and were slaughtered like livestock.

“Escape! All forces, do not fall to your knees. Do everything you can to run away!”

Despite having shouted as if I was vomiting blood, my soldiers did not respond. They were merely swept up by the panic, and were running about in confusion. There were even soldiers who had lowered their heads to the ground and began trembling.

“Your lordship. You have to escape!”

My adjutant shouted.

“This place is dangerous! Please consider the future!”

“But the soldiers—”

“We do not consider men who are unable to take care of their own lives as a part of the free company. Hey! Take his lordship margrave and retreat quickly! If our lord gets even a single scratch, then I will personally shove a nail in your ass!”

The cavalry came to my side, but I did not move. I was the commander. I could not run away while leaving behind my soldiers. Even if they were not a citizen militia but hired soldiers instead, it was still the same.

“Pardon my rudeness.”

My adjutant extended his leg. He then stabbed the heel of his shoe into the thigh of my warhorse. My warhorse, having been jabbed by a sharp heel, let out a loud neigh and started to run at full speed.

“Adjutant!”

“The Goddesses shall protect Rosenberg!”

In mere moments, I had crossed over the hill and escaped from the battlefield. I turned back for the final time and saw my adjutant doing whatever he could to get the soldiers in order.

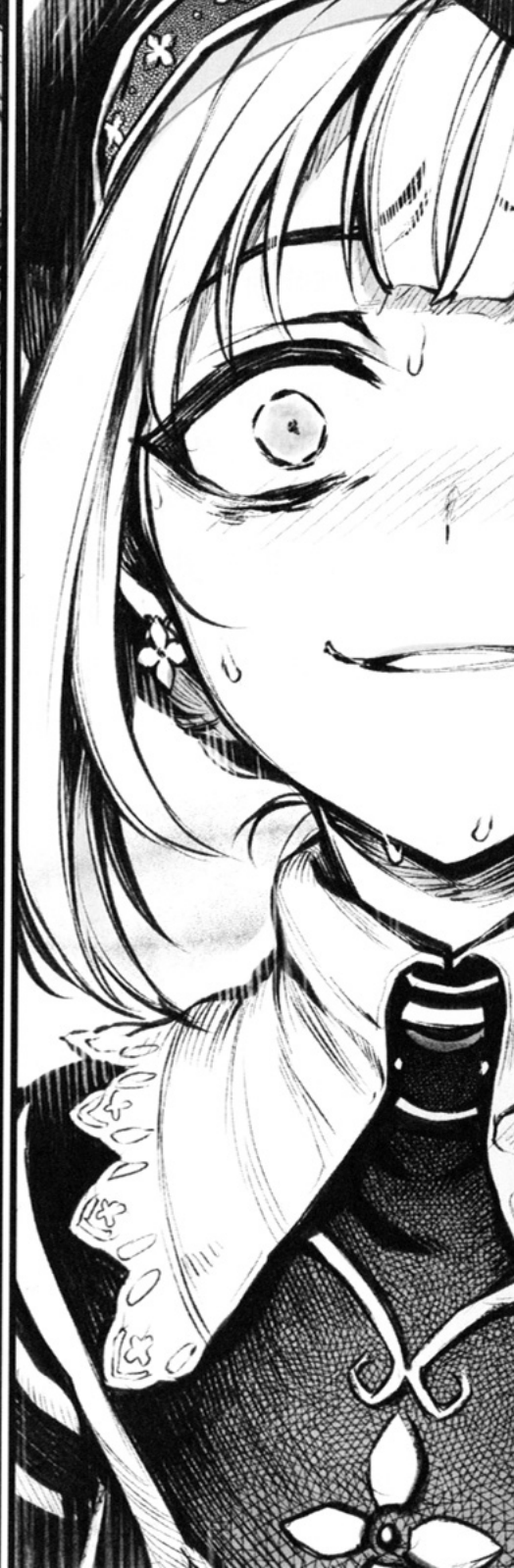
An arrow came flying from somewhere and pierced my adjutant's head. He fell from his horse. My adjutant's facial expression, and the sight of him falling to the ground, I was not able to see any of it. The infantry were completely covering the area around him. My adjutant's corpse fell into the center of remnant troops..... like being swallowed into an ocean.....

“—Kuuuuuh!”

The taste of blood spread in my mouth. Unbeknownst to me, I had bit my tongue. Wrath travelled through my veins and raged on. The inside of my head became so hot that my skull felt numb. I glared at the hill.

“I will kill you.....!”

It was certain that that girl was the enemy forces' commander. That greeting, the greeting that appeared so modest, was nothing more than a signal to commence fire. That girl was the pawn of Demon Lord Dantalian. The main culprit to bestow onto me disgrace. And my, Rosenberg's, enemy!



“I will not forgive you! Swearing on the River of Styx, I will not forgive you until the day you die! Putting the name and honor of Rosenberg on the line, putting my blood and bone on the line, I will absolutely kill you!”

Mock this as the shouts from a defeated bastard. That was fine.

As a pledge of oath, I spoke the maxim passed down for generations in my family.

“The North shall not send this vengeance into oblivion!”

I shall devote the remainder of my little remaining life to get revenge on that girl. Demon Lord Dantalian. You as well, I shall cut off your head and place it on the Goddess’ altar. And then, once I’ve achieved all of my vengeance, is when I shall close my eyes.....

Chapter Four

Baroque Game of Truth or Dare

¶ Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 17
Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle vicinity

“A person who appears to be a noble is escaping. Lord, is it fine to not pursue him?”

“Leave him be. That man is Margrave von Rosenberg. A high noble who's contending for precedence in the northern region of the Habsburg empire. If I were to capture the margrave here, then the consequences would become needlessly big.”

I declared.

There was no reason for us to distinguish ourselves more than necessary yet.

‘The rank 71st rice fish Demon Lord had suddenly captured the greatest margrave in the empire.’, this would become an excessively large scandal. Instantly gaining the attention of the entire continent. Factions earnestly vigilant towards me will appear as well. This was something I did not wish for.

The Earl of Rosenberg's territory was located on the border area between the human and demon world.

In order for the demon armies to invade the humans, and the human armies to invade the demons, this was the path that both sides had to cross over first. If we were to thoughtlessly touch this danger zone, then we would be waking up a sleeping wolf.

Staying low was the right choice here.

“Although we may have won here, if you looked at it objectively,

this is not an impressive victory. This was nothing more than 3,000 soldiers suppressing a mere 1,000. Adding to that, I have lost my Demon Lord Castle as well. If anything, the other demons will most likely ridicule me.”

A Demon Lord who had lost his Demon Lord Castle despite having an overwhelming advantage in troops by 3 times the amount.

I planned to make that into how people evaluated me.

In conclusion, while I was a parvenu who had luckily sold the black herb in order to become this prosperous, I was also disregarded as the fool among fools who had accepted a half-breed outcast as my lover. If this wasn't a perfect disguise tactic, then I didn't know what it was.

I laughed with satisfaction.

“That margrave has done quite the outstanding job. To think he would blow up my Demon Lord Castle..... I was hoping that he would at least pillage the herbs from my castle, but he had gone and done something beyond that instead. How splendid.”

“No matter how big the world is, the only Demon Lord who would be happy that their Demon Lord Castle was destroyed is your lordship.”

Miss Farnese spoke in a dumbfounded tone.

“Although this young lady thinks that the other Demon Lords will look down on your lordship completely.”

“I can only be grateful if they do belittle me.”

That was exactly what I wanted.

“Think about it, De Farnese. Margrave von Rosenberg could have easily mobilized a force of 10,000 soldiers. However, the actual amount of troops he had brought with him was merely 1,000. A

military force consisting mainly of light infantry and cavalry, at that. How much could he have been underestimating me to have done this?”

But it was thanks to that, I was able to survive.

If the margrave had led a massive army of ten thousand soldiers to invade my castle, then I would have been helpless to defend myself.

Even if I was overflowing with money, it still required time to draft troops. It would require several months before we could gather enough troops to even come close to 10,000. If we were unfortunate, then we would have had to recruit troops for 6 months while staying on our toes.

Regardless, Margrave von Rosenberg had stopped mobilizing troops at one thousand. An escape route was created there. The margrave's carelessness had allowed me to preserve my life.

“It is a rule that even lions put their all into hunting rabbits. That margrave did not know of this simple truth, which lead to his own demise.”

“To put your all into hunting a rabbit, is it.....? That is quite the profound line. This young lady shall keep it in mind.”

“How commendable. As a reward I shall press your crown.”

“Ah—, ackackack—, but we won— We achieved victory like your lordship wanted, but why is this young lady being kneaded agaaaaain.....?”

Give up. From now on, this little lady was my personal rice cake. I had taken a liking to this unbearably squishy feeling of her head. I shall dote on you as much as I did my second half little sister.

After the battle was over, we had captured a considerable amount of prisoners. Around 600 of the 1,000 enemy troops had lost their will to fight and surrendered. Since it was both myself and Miss Farnese's

first time dealing with post war matters, we were perplexed.

“Does your lordship have a facility to accommodate prisoners?”

“What do you expect from a Demon Lord who just had their Demon Lord Castle destroyed?”

“Mm. Since it would be troubling to let them go like this, let us just get rid of them.”

I shrugged my shoulders. I had no reason to refuse.

600 humans were dealt with on the hill that day.

While looking down at the sight of the slaughter happening before us, we shared a friendly conversation(is what it's called, but read as kneading punishment). The prisoners wailed and pleaded for us to spare them, but we ignored it.

“Ah, now that I think about it.”

I remembered something important.

“De Farnese. You have not committed murder with your own two hands before, have you?”

“Mm? If you were to go into details then yes, your lordship is correct.”

“I recommend using this opportunity to experience the act of killing. The difference between killing someone in your head and actually killing someone is considerably vast. If you were to gain the experience beforehand, then you will not end up in a delicate situation later on.”

“Indeed. That makes sense.”

Laura De Farnese nodded her head and proceeded to go down the hill. She received a long sword from one of our soldiers and immediately swung it at a prisoner's neck in one smooth motion.

Because the neck wasn't severed in a single hit, she had to swing the blade 5 to 6 times.

With the prisoner's head in her left hand, Miss Farnese trudged her way back to where I was. She looked at me and tilted her head.

"This young lady didn't really feel any noteworthy emotion?"

"Hou. It seems you have a stronger heart than I imagined."

In my case, I was quite shaken up after my first kill.

I could still distinctly remember my shaking hands from having killed my two kidnappers. I was in my 3rd year of elementary school at the time.

Although, in truth, the person to have incited that kidnapping was one of my father's concubines.

At the time, one of my kidnappers had screamed in terror, 'I did nothing wrong! Your family said they'd pay me. Please forgive me!'

Perhaps I was more shocked by that statement than I was at my murders.

People blinded by love were bound to do something crazy.

My father had closed his eyes eternally unaware of the truth of this incident. I had purposely stayed silent on my side. It felt like I would be a snitch if I told him, so it was not to my liking. That was my view back then.

I did not want to borrow the hand of my father.

I would personally punish the one who threatened my life.

Since the lion does not ask the tiger to fight in their stead.

At the age of 10, was the moment my own fundamental sense of ethics was engraved into my brain.

“Lord. This young lady wishes to make this prisoner’s head into a skull and keep it.”

Miss Farnese hugged the head and spoke.

“For one reason or another, this is the first person this young lady has ever killed. It is a monumental event. Due to your lordship, this young lady was able to discover that making history on one’s own is much more enjoyable than keeping watch on the history of the past. Thus, this fellow’s head shall be the first sacrifice to carve this young lady’s name into history…… I desire to cherish it preciouslly.”

“Well, is it not fine? A hobby of collecting skulls is rather sophisticated so it is remarkable.”

“Mm, this young lady knew your lordship would understand.”

It was not like I understood her exactly.

I was respecting her.

After Laura De Farnese had given the order to clean up the postwar outcome—I had passed this task onto her because it was extremely tiresome to do myself—I went to look for Lapis Lazuli.

Lala was organizing documents in the quarters at the rear end of our forces. Once I entered the room, Lala stopped what she was doing and stared at me.

“ ”

“ ”

The moment I was about to open my mouth, she took the initiative.

“This one is disappointed.”

“ ”

“—This one was disappointed.”

Lapis Lazuli put down the stack of paper.

And glared straight at me.

“Your highness had treated this one like a common lover. What this one desired from your highness was to be treated as a companion of authority, never did this one desire for a lovers relationship chained down to one another. Why did your highness carelessly try to steal this one’s game and prey?”

“.....I am sorry.”

“Yesterday, did your highness say that your highness loved this one?”

I nodded my head.

“Does your highness still love this one?”

“Surprisingly, it seems so.”

“.....Haa.”

Lapis Lazuli let out a small sigh.

“Let us establish rules.”

“By rules, you mean?”

“Do not ask for affection from this one, and this one as well, will not yearn for affection from your highness. The most important thing to your highness and this one is taking hold of power in the demon world. In order to achieve that, a cold attitude that is capable of going through blood and tears is necessary.”

“I agree completely.”

“..... Things have become a mess.”

Lapis Lazuli pressed her fingers on her forehead and closed her eyes.

“Love is nothing more than a weakness. The excess baggage of emotion that serves no purpose. For your highness to truly consider this one as a woman is a surprise. Before this one is a woman, this one is a mere peasant succubus who wishes to secure success.”

“Lala. I have something to say regarding this matter as well.”

I smiled faintly.

“I am not the only one with excess baggage attached to their emotions. Lala. You do as well. It is regrettable, but you are not in the position to be so confidently reproaching me.”

“This one apologizes, but this one is unable to understand what your highness is talking about.”

“Are you not in love with me as well?”

“.....”

Lapis Lazuli slowly knit her brows.

“Is your highness sane? There is a limit to overinflated egos.”

“Think carefully. If I were to fall into being a slave to love, if anything, it would be beneficial for you. If I were to be bound, made to submit, and forced to kneel by each and every one of your words, then eventually, you will take a position more superior to Demon Lord Dantalian. Thus, on the day that I obtain the seat of power, you, having already placed me into your hand, would be the true greatest authority, would you not?”

Lapis Lazuli shut her mouth.

The smile on the edge of my mouth grew wider.

“But you did not do so. No, you were unable to even entertain that

notion. Instead of feeling delighted at the sight of myself obsessing over you, you felt displeasure. Why do you think that was so?"

"....."

A long period of time passed.

A certain shock was contained within Lapis Lazuli's blue eyes. As if she was witnessing an overwhelming natural landscape for the first time.

".....Your highness is right. This one had no reason to refuse your highness' courtship. Why would this one....."

"That is because you love me."

I took a step towards her.

Our gaze grew closer by that much as well.

"However, before loving someone else, we love authority more. Therefore, we love the person who also loves the same authority as ourselves. Like how a musician would be attracted to their lover who appreciated music. Like how a poet would be attracted to their lover who was infatuated by poems....."

Exactly the same as themselves.

Towards the person who strongly yearned for authority as much as themselves.

Towards the person who understood as much as they did on what authority was.

Us being drawn together was inevitable.

"Lala. I love the you, who loves authority."

"....."

“Your cold tenacity, your merciless pragmatism, and your attitude that does not allow even the slightest bit of carelessness and tolerance. I love them all. However, at the moment you lose your pure aspiration towards your lust for power, I will love you no longer.”

“.....This one understands.”

Lapis Lazuli's eyes slowly became thin.

“The sight of your highness regarding something other than authority as precious, this one had felt disappointment towards that. Because this one had perceived that the part of your highness that this one loves was waning.”

Lapis Lazuli closed her eyes.

Slowly, as if she was trying to appreciate something.

“So this is..... **my love.**”

“That is so.”

Another step.

“We are the same. The two of us both love authority the most. Therefore, when we see the other person disregard power, an uncontrollable rage stirs inside of us.”

“What your highness has said is correct. Authority has the prime value. Nothing can be said against this.”

Lapis opened her eyes.

Lala's usual cold gaze was there.

“Although this one does admit that she loves your highness, this one has to apologize. In the end, your highness is not more precious than authority.”

We are the same.

A step closer.

Perhaps it wasn't appropriate to refer to this emotion as love.

It was not love.

It was not friendship.

The same kin.

The feeling of ascertaining the fact that a person perfectly akin to myself existed in this world.

Not like Laura De Farnese, who had only recently stood up on her own, but two people who have already discovered themselves and were completely developed. These two met and recognized who the other person was, and confirmed their kin.

Up until now, I was a unique race in my own world.

Only I existed, and I alone formed another type of humanoid race distant from other Homo sapiens.

But now, I had met Lapis Lazuli and discovered the second of my kind.

In other words,

Love for humanity.

We were currently perceiving a love for humanity that consisted of solely us two.

“Do you know what is the best part about being a Demon Lord? It is the fact that I barely have to sleep. There was a time that I had stayed up for four nights in a row agonizing over something. At the time, I very much disliked the idea of falling asleep and having my worries be cut off mid-way.”

Taking the final step closer towards her.

We had finally reached one another.

“Normal people would say that dreams are pointless. That among the things in one’s life, something like dreams was not needed. However, I’m a bit different. Dreams not only made my life feel useless, but it made it powerless as well. I have always been swept up in this emotion.”

“Even though it may only be by half, this one is still a succubus.”

Without anyone having to take the initiative.

She and I slowly drew our bodies together.

While I wrapped my arm around her back, she moved her own arm around me as well.

Like two venomous snakes coiling around each other.

“This one can control your highness’ dreams.”

“You shall make me perfect.”

“Yes. This one shall make your highness perfect. And this one as well, shall become perfect through your highness.”

Our faces grew closer.

Our breaths too, grew closer.

“You are **my weakness**. However, if we pay enough attention, if we do not forget what race we are originally from, then not a relationship where we reveal each other’s flaws, but a relationship where we cover each other’s shortcomings instead.”

Solely for a more mighty authority.

Solely for a more exalted authority.

Thus, not a fiancée, but—

A partner.

The two of us were partners.

“Lapis Lazuli. I love you.”

“This one too, loves your highness. Lord Dantalian.”

Our lips met.

A virtuous sound effect rang in my ear.

**You’ve sincerely reached a communion with the other
party!**

Lapis Lazuli’s affection went up by 50!

Instead of paying attention towards something like a notice window, I pushed further into Lala’s touch.

Her cool yet soft skin was pleasant.

A bit deeper.

While exploring each other’s warmth, while confirming each other’s existence.

I to myself, and her to herself, each person simply filled each other.

Like a dog chasing its shadow.

Avariciously.



☐ Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian

Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 21

Niflheim, Governor's Palace

“Barbatos. This morning you came here and told me this. That the only significance love has is that it reveals your weakness. That people don't grow stronger through love, but they grow stronger after throwing it away instead.”

“.....”

“Your words are half right and half wrong. Certainly, Lapis was my weakness, and I too was Lapis' weakness. But that is it. While the two of us share love, we do not make each other weak.”

On the contrary, it was the opposite.

“We only make the other stronger without bounds.”

Barbatos fell into a silence.

While enjoying my wine, I spoke.

“Our love may not be warm, but it is cold. We may not be soft, but we are sharp. Even though we may be unable to accept something, we are still going towards something. We are firm, so we do not break, and in perfect order, we annihilate the enemy before our eyes. That is our practice. And it is also the reason why we had returned to Niflheim after defeating the margrave's army.”

“What do you mean?”

“The letter.”

“What?”

I smiled.

“The culprit to have written that letter informing me of the invaders is none other than you, Barbatos.”

“.....”

For an instant.

Barbatos' face froze.

“Like I said, what are you talking.....?”

“It was a simple test. The culprit always returns to the scene of the crime which they had succeeded in committing. I tried utilizing this old and antique saying once.”

With a soft gaze.

As if I was stroking her with my hand, I glanced at Barbatos from head to toe.

“Whoever it was that had sent me the letter, it was clear that the person held goodwill towards me. Since they did notify me of the fact that invaders were going to appear, after all. However, who could have known the detailed circumstances of Margrave Rosenberg, and had the capability of acquiring such information? Barbatos, how vast does one's information network have to be in order to know the exact information of the dispatched troops? The culprit was without a doubt someone with great power.”

For example.

Someone powerful enough to be rank 8th.

Someone hostile towards the humans and thus constantly taking

note of the military movement in the human side.

Someone who was well-informed of the situation in Earl Rosenberg's territory, since it resides in the border area between demon and humankind.

"Yes. Barbatos. A person of authority such as yourself."

"....."

Barbatos opened her mouth.

At some point, she had regained her mischievous expression.

".....Aha, ahahaha. I was curious as to what you were trying to say."

Her voice was composed as well.

"Dantalian. Of course, I'm quite the freaking awesome person, just as you said. An information network in the human race, well, obviously I have that. Since you never know when those humans are going to try and start some funny business."

Barbatos grinned.

Her acting ability was quite splendid. As a politician, it was the ideal. It wasn't a coincidence that she was the leader of such a large political faction known as the Plains Faction.

Her usual exaggerated actions that appeared frivolous, her mixing of profanities into her words that made the ears of others feel unpleasant, and her wearing clothes with so much exposure that it made others troubled on where to put their eyes. **These were all calculated actions.**

A means to lure and manipulate another person's mind as she pleased.

"But that's all, you know? I'm not the type of person to write

something trivial like a message. If something happens, then like right now, I'd spit it right in your face in person. Why would I send a letter like some narrow-minded fool?"

She had approached me as if she truly cared about my well-being, despite being a person who had absolutely no interest in my love life.

She acted as if she was sincerely listening to my story.

Therefore, I had said earlier.

That Barbatos was a **good woman**.

I have rarely ever seen a woman as politically thorough as this.

Barbatos was able to develop her acting ability through the extensive 500 years of her life. Certainly, it was a tremendous ability. Aah, it was at the level that would make even the greatest of actors cry. Although it wasn't on my level, I acknowledged that it was right below my chin.

Original talent won over effort.

My aptitude for acting could only overwhelm your efforts.

"In the first place, if I did send you that letter, then there's no reason for me to be denying it like this. Don't you think so? In the end, you were saved thanks to that note."

Barbatos shrugged her shoulders.

"Without that letter, you wouldn't have known the margrave's army was invading and would have just got done in. Therefore, the person who wrote that letter is your savior. Why would I throw away the free opportunity to put you in my debt? That's because I really didn't send it."

Although it was plausible.

It was a shallow excuse.

“Barbatos. That’s because you didn’t send that letter with the intention of saving me.”

“Hey, fuck. I keep saying I didn’t send it, but you’re still saying that?”

“You wrote that letter with the intention to simply ‘test’ me.”

“.....”

Barbatos had said to me.

— I was hoping that an actual useful rookie had appeared after such a long time, but isn’t he just a complete mental patient? Haaa, my fate is always like this.....

— How the hell do I make this retard function like an actual person.....

How could she have known that I was **a useful rookie**?

Was it simply because I was able to make money off of the black herbs?

Barbatos did not know the inner details of what exactly I had done to become wealthy. Was it merely thanks to luck, or was it because I had gotten Ivar Lodbrok in the palm of my hand? Luck and skill, which side was the source of my success was uncertain to her.

Thus.

By the time Barbatos had brought up those words, she had already tested me using a certain method beforehand.

“After hearing the news that the margrave’s army was moving, Barbatos, you most likely wanted to see my ability once. You wanted

to see with your own eyes if I truly was a useful personnel. You sent the letter, and then patiently waited to see how I responded to the invaders.....”

The result was a pass.

Demon Lord Dantalian had safely passed the test called Margrave von Rosenberg.

Now Demon Lord Barbatos had decided that she would recruit Demon Lord Dantalian into her faction.

Except, there was a large problem placed there.

“Do you perhaps remember? The words you uttered the moment you came here yesterday.”

“.....No. Since I’m not the type of person to particularly remember something useless.”

“Then remember it now. For this was not an unimportant occasion for you, not by a long shot. From the very beginning you had abruptly said to me this.”

— If you’re trying to break up with that succubus lover of yours, then I can help.

— In the first place, it doesn’t make sense for an outcast to be having sex with a Demon Lord. It’s not too late yet, so ask for my help.

Speaking frankly, this was a severely meddlesome thing to say.

But if you changed your view slightly, then this was an exceedingly obvious advice.

Because if the personnel she planned to scout to her faction was ‘a fool who had taken an outcast as their lover’, a great damage would be inflicted on the image of Barbatos’ faction.

Image management was a core part of politics.

In Barbatos’ position, there was a need to lead me into breaking up with Lapis no matter what.

“.....Haa. I gave you that advice while being purely considerate of you.”

After hearing my words, Barbatos grimaced.

“You’re really a bastard who treats favors like shit, huh? What? Does everyone appear like coyotes aiming only for political gains in those eye sockets of yours? Your way of thinking is really terrible, Dantalian.”

“When you heard the news that Demon Lord Dantalian was slapped in the plaza by Lapis.”

I spoke in a low tone.

Barbatos sealed her lips.

“At the time you probably thought this. That a golden opportunity had arrived. You quickly approached me with the intention of striking while the iron was hot. Within 20 minutes after I was slapped, at that.”

— Go ahead and let it all out. Why did you two fight?

— Do you not see me applying ice still? It has only been 20 minutes since I was slapped by Lapis.

“Here in Niflheim, I am famous for my passionate love for Lapis. In your position, the headache this must have caused you must have been immense. For starters, you had to make them break up, but how you were going to accomplish in separating them, didn’t come to you.”

“.....”

“At the report that I was slapped, you thought that ‘this is it’. There’s no weaker glass than someone who was just in an argument with their lover, and moments after they had went their separate ways. It would shatter if you tapped it with a hammer. You most likely assumed that if you played your cards right, then you could tear the relationship between Lapis and I with ease.”

Then Barbatos was cautious.

In order to not let her true intentions be obvious.

— Did you say your lover’s name was Lapis Lazuli? Damn she’s admirable. How the hell was she able to deal with you? If it were me, I’d have cut your balls off and ran away a long time ago.

This was the part where Barbatos was commendable.

She did not take my side, but on the contrary, had taken Lapis’ side instead.

As if to plant the misunderstanding that ‘breaking up on her account’ was the right choice.

— You two really should just break up.

She had adroitly disguised her words.

Initially, Barbatos must have been pleased that everything was flowing passively. Once Barbatos had heard that I tried to kill Lapis' mother, she was certain.

This is finished.

Barbatos was convinced that a person who could tolerate a man who had tried to kill their own mother and continue their lover relationship, did not exist.

However, as her stratagem was progressing smoothly—she was faced with a problem that she had never expected.

“The instant you started to panic, Barbatos. Was the moment I confessed for the second time my love for Lapis. It must have been incredibly preposterous. I understand. You most likely never imagined there would be a person in the world whose love was as insane as mine.

“.....”

“You had tried to convince me quite verbosely.”

—How is that love?

—That's, not love.

—It's fine if you two break up, but love..... is an emotion that's more precious than anything else. It is something that other things should yield willingly to, to make way for.

“The emotion that I feel now is not love. Love is something more noble than anything else. More sacred. It is something that is softer..... By claiming so, you wanted me to point to my own emotion

and say that ‘this is not love’, right?”

I smiled gently.

“I’m sorry that you were unable to achieve your aim, Barbatos. This is my payment for being my love counsellor throughout the night. I shall specially prove that this is another example of love.”

Jingle

I raised a small bell and shook it.

Once I did so, the door to the reception room opened and someone entered. Barbatos was startled and turned to look towards the door. There, Lapis was standing with an emotionless expression on her face.

“Did your highness call?”

“Aah. You went through a lot of trouble standing in wait all night, Lapis.”

“It is fine. Thanks to your highness, this one has become accustomed to staying up all night.”

At the sight of us two conversing, Barbatos looked at us with a perplexed complexion.

“What is this.....?”

“Lapis. It seems her highness Barbatos is a bit doubtful of our love. It appears she thinks that you hold a grudge against me for having tried to kill your birth mother. What do you think? Would you care to show it to her highness Barbatos as well?”

“Understood. This one shall present it immediately.”

Lapis bowed and left the reception room. Barbatos looked at me with eyes that looked as if she couldn’t understand. Well, wait a little. Lapis’ pace is unexpectedly fast so she will return momentarily.

A peculiar silence passed. Shortly after, Lapis returned. In her hands, she was carrying a silver platter that the maids used to deliver food.

“Now then, Lapis. Show it to her highness Barbatos.”

“Yes. Excuse this one.”

Lapis delicately lifted the lid off of the tray.

“.....”

Barbatos’ eyes became wide.

While beaming, I clapped my hands.

“How is it? Is it not splendid? This is Lapis Lazuli. This is my first love, my mistress who may perhaps be my only love. Barbatos. Behold.”

On top of the shining silver platter was a person’s head.

The **face of the old woman** who came here half a month ago.

“That is Lapis’ birth mother.”

“.....What?”

“Do you still not understand? She was murdered. By Lapis herself!”

I burst out in laughter.

The sound of laughter filled the reception room. Though this was quite the discourteous thing to do in the middle of the night, it was unavoidable. How am I to stop when laughter came from my chest all on its own?



“Lapis was not enraged because I had tried to kill her mother. She was upset because I had carelessly tried to step forward while forgetting my place!”

Barbatos’ complexion was still bewildered.

“What..... are you saying?”

“I’m talking about revenge, Barbatos. Revenge! Is it not obvious that one must obtain vengeance with their own two hands against the person who had ruined their life? Despite that, since I had tried to do as I pleased and achieve revenge in her stead, of course Lapis would be mad!”

—Why did your highness carelessly try to steal this one’s game and prey?

The line Lapis had said to me.

The words she had said while reprimanding me had that meaning.

Unable to contain my own laughter, I chuckled. It was a completely unseemly laugh. However, I wasn’t overflowing with the breadth of mind to be concerned with my dignity here. I wanted to enjoy this moment to the fullest.

“You understand now, right? On the 9th month and 3rd day, the day that old woman came to my reception room, Lapis had immediately chased after her and assassinated the old hag in secret. Aah, how lovely this girl is! How adamantly this girl had executed an equation of revenge! Lapis, I truly love you.....”

“.....Her highness Barbatos is watching. Please have some dignity, Lord Dantalian.”

“What of it? It becomes better the more love one shares.”

Lapis Lazuli let out a small sigh.

Now even that sigh was lovely. Truly, I really am the apostle of love. Even Goddess Aphrodite would look down at me and smile contentedly. To point at me and criticize that ‘I did not know love’, there was a limit to obstinately false propaganda.

“It’s not only the old woman. Lapis had even assassinated the maid that had insulted her. To my surprise, I found out later on that the incident was covered up as an accident. They said food got caught in her throat and she choked to death, but in truth it was poison. It is fine to marvel, Barbatos. Since our Lapis is truly a remarkable woman.”

“This certainly is indeed a problem, seeing that your highness’ drive has gone beyond control. This one shall take her leave.”

“Ah, sure. Go and get some rest. Since we will not be sharing a bed tonight, you do not have to go out of your way to apply rose oil before you sleep—.”

“.....”

After giving me a cold gaze, Lapis left the reception room.

Yes. I was self-aware of the fact that I was behaving fairly foolishly. But this was my first love. It was obvious that I would be unable to come to my senses and was infatuated with a girl. This was perfectly normal. I turned my head to gaze at Barbatos.

“I told her that if I were to be slapped in a plaza, while in front of many people, then the culprit to have sent the letter will come find me. And once I did, without a single bit of hesitation, she slapped me. Then we acted as if we had broken up.”

Lapis Lazuli was that kind of woman.

The partner that I loved was that kind of woman.

“—And so, Barbatos.”

“.....”

“How was it? Oh maestro of love, who has had over 1,000 lovers over a course of 500 years. Oh Barbatos, who had said that if I listened to your love advice then beautiful women would give me fellatio even if I was just laying down. What is your impression on the new category of love which you have witnessed for the first time in 500 years?”

Barbatos went silent.

With her head bent downwards, her shoulders trembled.

And then.

“.....Ha.”

Her shoulders shook a bit more violently.

“Ha.....haha, hahah.....ahaha— Hahahaha—.....Heu, gehehe—
eheuh, Keuhehe— Haa, heu, ha—haha, **KAHAH! KUHAAAAHA!**
HAHA, AHAHAHAHA—!”

What started as uncontrollable laughter had reached uncontrollable laughter of madness.

Barbatos shook her entire body as she laughed.

The laughter continued on for a long while. Barbatos snapped her head back up. A clear insanity flowed on her face. The rims of her eyes and the corners of her mouth were twisted in gleeful derision, and her white teeth shined with voracious greed.

“A masterpiece! **This is, a masterpiece!**”

This.

This was the rank 8th.

The highest ranking necromancer praised for her immortality, this was Demon Lord Barbatos' naked face.

“Aaang? Heung, euung? Dantalian, you were able to present me joy that went beyond my expectations. I've taken a liking in you. I've really, tremendously taken a liking in you. If perhaps, your goal was to bargain for my goodwill then I will congratulate you. Mm. Since I have certainly become fond of you.”

“I'm glad that you're delighted.”

I shrugged my shoulders.

“As the actor who had provided you with this performance throughout the night, it is rewarding.”

“Performance? Puh, puhahaha. That was a performance? That was a stage that you calculated from start to finish? This retarded fuck. Are you saying that you did all kinds of shit just to incite laughter from me!?”

“You are Barbatos. The rank 8th Demon Lord. If it took only a single night to touch your sincerity, then I consider this a cheap price.”

If there was another object that I had invested on for this night, then it was the Year 1101 Balleleunium wine.

I had purposely acquired the finest quality wine in order to incite even the smallest bit of carelessness in Barbatos. In order to enjoy this most sublime wine, Barbatos had thoughtlessly allowed herself to get drunk. She had disabled the alcohol detoxification inside of her, on her own. The result was this comedy happening before me.

“Kakakaka! Yeah, it's certainly a cheap price. You really do know your place. My inner thoughts that I've never revealed to anyone for 300 years, you were able to obtain within a single night, after all. But

that's foolish. Aah, there's no doubt that it's foolish."

Barbatos grinned.

Her smile was so wide that it felt like the corners of her mouth would rip.

"I can't overlook someone who's figured out what kind of bitch I am, you know? Makes me nervous. If you spread a rumor like—I looked into it and found out that Barbatos is actually a bitch who raises internal organs and venomous snakes. Hm? The negative impact I'd receive won't be small."

"Most likely."

"Now then, Dantalian. Quickly turn that smart head of yours. How should I deal with the bastard who has witnessed my naked face? My compatriots of the demon world only think of me as someone who's pure and righteous, you know? In order to not disappoint those kids, I have the duty to rip your mouth out. Think well before I cut your tongue off, little Demon Lord....."

Barbatos slowly approached me.

A black mist billowed around her.

A mist formed by magical energy. The discerning eye to know what kind of magical effect that mist had was absent to me. Except, even I could tell that it wasn't something good for my health.

"No, cutting off your tongue would be a waste. Your eloquence and voice would certainly be useful in demagoguery operations. Should I make you into my puppet? Would that be more efficient? For starters, should I kill you by slitting your throat, and then revive you into a slave that listens and obeys my commands alone?"

Barbatos chuckled.

"That would be fun. Ah, while I'm at it, should I also make your

succubus lover into a slave as well? I may despise succubi the most in the world, but in one way or another, I've taken a liking to you both. I'll organize an arena where you two can kill and die to one another. But of course.....”

Barbatos gripped my chin and raised it slightly.

Her golden eyes were exceptionally close.

“The story would be different if you pledge your loyalty to me.”

“.....”

“I am a generous Demon Lord, Dantalian. I protect the people who come into my faction no matter what and until the very end. Albeit there may be a slight condition, that isn't very important.

“.....I'm rather curious as to what that condition is.”

“Hm. **Not being able to leave the faction until you die.**”

Barbatos smiled smoothly.

The insanity which was flowing on her face a second ago was nowhere in sight now.

But it wasn't surprising. You did not determine how psychotic a person was by how quickly they revealed their madness, but rather, you determined it by how swiftly they hid their lunacy.

“Although, you actually won't be able to leave even after death. Since I'm the greatest necromancer in the continent. If I put in a little effort then I could revive your corpse. That's why, for all of eternity—you will join my faction and work until your bones are dust.”

“May I ask what your goal for labor is?”

“What a trivial question. Obviously, it was already decided on **the extermination of humankind.**”

A bitter laugh unintentionally slipped out from me because of the very Demon Lord-like response.

Still smiling comfortably like a Marian, Barbatos spoke.

“The demon world is too barren. Not only is agriculture barely possible, there is a limit to feeding all of our people while relying solely on commerce. Just the mere fact that those inferior humans are occupying that abundant agriculture belt fills me with rage.”

“Conquering the continent. Is that your goal, Barbatos?”

“No. My goal is providing the demonkind with a bountiful life. Dantalian, I may be a warrior, but before that, I am a single empress.”

Barbatos bit my right ear.

With a ‘crunch’, the feeling of my bones in my ear breaking transferred to me.

I felt the pain but I endured it. The liquid flowing down from my ear was probably blood.

“That Paimon bitch is declaring for coexistence with the humans, but honestly, that’s not possible. Look. Different from us, humans all look alike. Despite that, they are split apart by nations or whatever and are hostile towards each other. For our demonkind, who varies in appearance, language, and customs, to get along with the humans? That’s superb nonsense.”

“.....”

“But us demons are different. Demons can come together as one under Demon Lords. It is possible for a countless number of races to cohere into a single group.”

“And therefore. That’s why we’re the sacred and inviolable representatives that symbolize absolute dignity, and members of an

order of 72 who rule over all demons.....”

“Exactly. Well done, our little Dantalian.”

While grinning, Barbatos pulled my ear.

She stubbornly pulled at the part where the flesh was torn and the bones were breaking.

“Since humans don’t accept the divinity of Demon Lords, there is no other choice but to exterminate them completely. That’s why those guys are like the foreign substance of our world. For the utopia of everyone becoming one and living peacefully, we have to wipe them out.”

“That is quite the extreme logic.”

“Logic is always extreme. The ignorant masses are terrified of that extremity and live under a vague but warm self-comfort. To them, the truth is like a cold snowy wind, so if they are hit by it on their bare skin, they will freeze and die. Therefore, they cover themselves with rags layered with hypocrisy and deception. Believing that those rags are clothes. But unaware that, in truth, that was their skin.”

“That is an impressive philosophy.”

“I’d be glad if you referred to it as an incredibly accurate philosophy.”

Barbatos stopped harassing my ear.

Her fingers were covered in crimson blood. She brought them to her lips. And her saliva and my blood were mixed on her finger.

“Hm. Your blood is considerably sweet. I see your eating habits are clean.”

“I personally think that eating nothing when possible is the correct eating habit.”

“That’s a good way of thinking. And it’s also correct. That’s much better than those swines that shove their noses into whatever they can. You were slightly like a swine, Dantalian. I’ll use this opportunity to tell you.”

Barbatos whispered.

“Do not carelessly mess with Demons Lords above the rank of 10.”

“.....”

“You seem rather confident that you were able to crush that bitch Paimon, but make some air holes in your lungs. Despite her looks, she’s not an easy bitch. As if she didn’t appear like a whore already, she goes around opening her legs here and there, sheesh. If you make a wrong move towards her, then her lovers from all over..... it’ll be troublesome. Incredibly annoying.”

Barbatos clicked her tongue.

“You were just lucky. They let it slide that time since it was **so clear** that Paimon was in the wrong during the Walpurgis Night. I don’t know what’ll happen if a bunch of scary uncles approach you, you know?”

“.....”

“I’ll offer this to you for the final time. Come into my faction, Dantalian. With your resources, you could contribute to the prosperity of all demons on the continent. Even if your personality is rotten to the core, that doesn’t mean you’re unable to work for a righteous cause. Don’t worry. I’ll even look over that succubus lover of yours. Although you’ll have to quash your engagement. Even I’m capable of being lenient if you decide to keep her as your concubine in secret.....”

“I shall gift you war.”

Barbatos shut her mouth.

She furrowed her brows.

“What?”

“You’re most likely hoping for war, Barbatos. A massive war is required in order to destroy humanity. The present, where the Black Death is running rampant, the military forces of the humans are continuing to decrease. You should have judged that if you wished to accomplish the unification of the continent, then now was the golden opportunity.”

“.....Hmm.”

As if I had peaked her interest, Barbatos smiled slyly like a cat.

“And if your assumption is true. Then what?”

“I do not assume. I merely see through.”

That was the difference between a theorist and a politician.

“The war that you desire. I shall bring it upon us.”

“Kakaka. What’s this rank 71st rookie saying?”

Barbatos laughed mockingly.

“Do you know what scale of war that I want? A war of extermination. A war to exterminate an entire race. A massive war where all the Demon Lords take part in, along with all the nations of the human world. It’s not something small a loach like you could offer.”

“Yes.”

I smiled.

“The war that I will gift you is exactly that.”

“Haa? How would someone like you start a massive war.....”

“Spread the rumor that the Demon Lords have spread the Black Death.”

Silence.

A stillness fell on the reception room.

Barbatos let out a dubious voice.

“What are you talking about?”

“If you think about it, then it’s simple. The Black Death is currently sweeping over the entire continent. The regions that were successful in suppressing the initial spread is no more than a precious few, since the humans are less informed on plagues than us demons.”

A portion of cities were fortunate in preventing the spread of the plague.

It was thanks to the fact that I had discovered the black herb several years earlier than it was supposed to found. Some lords had utilized both their territory’s assets and family fortune to buy the black herbs en masse, and used those to protect their people.

However, the amount of lords who have done this were few.

The majority had used the expensive black herb only to protect themselves and their family. There were even people who bought the black herbs from me and distributed it for an exorbitant price. In conclusion, as the Black Death had done in <Dungeon Attack>, it was causing a countless number of lives to be lost.

The humans.

The peasants especially were experiencing hell.

“Human society is slowly breaking down. The lords and temples that are unable to handle this accordingly. The dissatisfaction towards the nations and royal families are at the highest point in history—in

this situation , if the rumor that ‘the Demon Lords caused the plague’ were to spread, then how do you think the monarchs in the human world would utilize this?”

“.....!”

Barbatos’ eyes grew wide.

Indeed, she was a smart woman.

She had soon grasped the intention that I was trying to convey to her.

“They will actively make use of this rumor. The people in the wrong are not the lords, the nations, or the royal families. They will zealously elucidate to the people that, the true axis of evil are the Demon Lords who had initially spread this atrocious epidemic.”

“Don’t tell me.....!”

“We will inversely make use of that usage.”

By obtaining the merchant named Lapis Lazuli, I had gained wealth.

By obtaining the general named Laura De Farnese, I had gained military strength.

The only thing which I required now was a just and great cause.

A justification.

A name.

My name.

“The lords in the human world will spread the rumor in order to extinguish the immediate flame, but they will do so while being unaware of how much terrifying force the Black Death will actually exhibit. As time passes, the humans will curse us Demon Lords.

Despise us. Obviously, the voices demanding for the military forces to rise and suppress the Demon Lords will rise exponentially. And without fail, the point where the lords in the human world are unable to control the overheated public opinion will arrive. The entire human race will cry out for war and vengeance, and the lords will only be able to conform to them.”

The name of the Demon Lords.

“Blow the horns of Pruteni. Sound the whistles of Livonia. Beat the drums of Jatvingians and make the entire continent tremble. Make the song of Selonian, Ratgallian, and Semigallian reign as the prominence of fear. **A devastating war, Barbatos. If we can’t invade them, then we just have to make them invade us.**”

I shall spread the name of Dantalian across the continent.

I delightfully watched Barbatos’ facial expression slowly solidify.

Smile more energetically. Is this not the entertaining part? I rather liked it when I smiled. It was surely the best when people lived smiling during the times they wanted to.

The occasion of myself becoming your vassal will never happen. But I will gladly become something like your business partner. Our immediate goal aligned. I shall put in some effort to become a sound business partner for you.

I stroked Barbatos’ cheek and declared.

“Show the humans what true hell is.”

Autumn was ending.

The leaves that must fall shall descend.

And the snow that must descend shall fall.

Now then.

Let us start the season of Dantalian.

▯ **Demon Lord of Immortality, Rank 8th, Barbatos**
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 9, Day 21
Niflheim, Governor's Palace

—**G**ood. Very good. But you're still far.

Dantalian. I'll admit that you're quite clever.

You may even perhaps be incredibly clever. Yes, if I were to compliment you further, then your head may spin better than mine.

However, you have no power. You have no information. In short, you don't have a 'faction'. The reason behind your decisive mistake lies there as well.

If you think that just because you're smart, you can understand the entire world, then that's quite the foolish miscalculation. For example, you're saying this now. That I had gathered information on the Earl of Rosenberg's territory and sent it to you in secret. But this is unfortunate.

You're only half right, and the rest is wrong.

Because **I'm the culprit who spread the rumor in the Earl's territory.**

Aha—.

On the 8th month and 20th day. As soon as I saw you achieve victory over that bitch Paimon during the Walpurgis Night, a thought arose. I will test out whether if you're real or fake.

So the very next day, I ordered my spies to spread the rumor. The Earl of Rosenberg's territory is in one of the most crucial areas among

areas, you know?

With some strenuous effort, I have an information network spread throughout that area.

Dantalian.

The problem always originates in the simplest difference in direction.

If one's information network is spread out well enough to acquire a rumor.

Then inversely, fabricating a rumor on this side and circulating it there, is obviously possible as well.

A simple concept that even kids could realize.

It was approximately on the 8th month and 24th day that the rumor had started to spread in earnest. Since the Black Death was a hot topic, it circulated with quite the speed.

And if the rumor spread in a way that told people 'a place right under the nose of their land has a boundless supply of black herbs'..... Hm? In the shoes of those bratty humans who were dying off by an incurable disease, then that would be enough to make them go mad for it, wouldn't it?

I understand everything as well.

Naturally, it's fun playing around with people's greed.

If there is one thing that I wasn't expecting, then it was the Margrave of Rosenberg's movements. He took action more promptly than I thought he would. By the time the rumor of rebellion could barely take root, he had already decided to dispatch troops.

On the 10th day since the groundless rumor had proliferated, the youngster of Rosenberg had put out a draft notice for soldiers. Indeed, it was a reaction speed that felt as fast as lightning.

Hm.

As expected of the house that has fought us Demon Lords for nearly 300 years now.

Should I say that they have no opening?

It's a house that seeks for perfection so much that I want to kill them.

Anyway, the situation flowed a bit direly.....

Although I did achieve my goal of putting that kid Dantalian in a difficult situation, the dispatch of troops was still excessively fast.

When my spies reported that the drafting of soldiers will most likely be completed within 6 days, I unintentionally let out a sigh. Was this the part where I should compliment them for being 'the haven of mercenaries', the northern region of Habsburg?

The distance between the Earl of Rosenberg's territory and Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle is about a 10 day march. If the military force mainly consists of infantry and cavalry, and they strain themselves a bit, then they can maybe arrive within a week.

Rosenberg's army would probably assault the Demon Lord Castle between the 9th month 16th day and 19th day. Barely half a month of delay remained. It felt like I had really fucked over a young Demon Lord.

Yup. I'm repenting.

Surely, it was immoderate to use a competent individual like the Earl of Rosenberg as a test subject to go against the rank 71st rookie.

Since it felt like this was a bit too much— I sent that letter.

You have an enemy.

10 days from now, an army of 2,000 men will invade your Demon Lord castle.

In case he tried to slack off, I purposely supplemented some exaggerations.

In truth, it'd probably take a bit more than 10 days, but I wrote 10. The military force was at most between 1,200 and 1,500, but I set it as 2,000. It was meant to tell him to be seriously alert.

..... But I never dreamed he would extract the defense militia from Niflheim as soon as he received the letter.

Even I was shocked here, rookie.

The fact that there's an unknown cooperation system established between Dantalian and the Keuncuska firm was clearly evident.

Well, the rest is according to this guy's 'guess'.

However.

"A devastating war, Barbatos. If we can't invade them, then we just have to make them invade us."

"....."

At Dantalian's proposal, I was at a lost for words for an instant.

It wasn't for a particular reason. I personally felt a sense of irony.

To me, Barbatos, who had spread a false rumor to send invaders at you.

To suggest for me to once more ‘circulate a false rumor, and drive the humans to attack us’.

This was most likely proof of the saying that no one knows how life will turn out.

“.....Hahah, ahahahah. Hahahaha!”

Even me bursting into laughter was natural.

Oh, Dantalian. You pitiable child. You’re trying to put a trap out for another prey, despite being caught in a trap yourself. Are you decorating that foolishness of yours as wisdom because of your gullibility or because of your pride?

Or—is it simply youth?

Even my already dead heart felt hot.

“How original, Dantalian. Very original.”

I stroked Dantalian from his abdomen, chest, neck, and cheek, one place at a time. I took a liking to his muscles that were firmer than they appeared. Dantalian gazed at me with a smile still on his lips.

“Half a month ago, around the time I sent you that letter, I was hoping that you would at least be a slightly interesting fellow. But by the looks of it, it seems I’ve lived for too long. With a person like you here, my hopes for the world are already daunted!”

“Barbatos.”

“Okay. I’ll cooperate with you. War? That’s what I was hoping for. A wild rumor? That’s just to my taste. To your bad habits, I, Barbatos will associate myself with you. How far you’ll be able to walk. What’ll be waiting for you at the end of your path. The immortal Barbatos will wait and see.”

Although it’s uncertain whether your conclusion may end with

myself taking your neck.

That is something to look forward to later.

Let's enjoy the current now.

“Just imagining how gruesome the war you'll start is enjoyable, Dantalian. You aren't planning to leave while disregarding the lady that you've heated up so much, are you?”

“What.....?”

I activated my magic mist.

The black mist licked the back of Dantalian's ear and seeped into his brain. Shaking this child's skull, it passed through his spine and dug into his lower body. Once that happened, Dantalian opened his eyes wide.

“Don't tell me, this mist.....”

“Yup. An aphrodisiac spell.”

I smiled suggestively.

Binding a rookie like you to my side is simple.

For starters, after establishing a relationship where your body is no longer able to deny me, then slowly, with one bite at a time, it'll be over after I chew away at you ever so slowly. Then at one point, all of your flesh will be torn off and only your bones will remain.

My name is Barbatos.

The Demon Lord of all the dead.

Anything that has become a skeleton will have no choice but to follow my command.

I sent my heated breath into Dantalian's ear.

“Since long ago, I’ve wanted to be pounded by a son of a bitch like you and pant like a dog..... do you want to try?”

And with that, it was over.

Oh clever child.

Ride on my hips and dance to your heart's content.

Until the moment you fall weakened, and finally perish.



To an author, the afterword is like the afterlife for atheists.

While being at ease and closing their eyes thinking their life is finally over, all of a sudden, an angel appears out of nowhere and mocks you while saying ‘It’s not over yet, punk’. And the atheist desperately tries to resist by pleading ‘But my life is already complete!’, but our beautiful angel smiles gently and responds, ‘That’s your problem, kid!’. Then the atheist will be at a lost for words. For that reason, the body text may be over, but now it’s time for the afterword.

First things first, a thank you to the illustrator of <Dungeon Defense>, cocorip. Thank you for the amazing cover and illustrations you drew this time as well. There’s always something admirable about the artwork that cocorip draws. Such as the killer illustration of volume 2—Dantalian, Lapis, and Laura sitting on chairs next to one another— for example. In my initial illustration plans I drew up for this, there was no background. And there, cocorip drew a ‘black flag’. Although you’ll be able to understand if you look at the illustration yourself, but the thing that gives the overall life to the artwork with a ‘Bam!’, is the flag on the left side that stretches out over to the right.

In the movie <Amadeus>, Salieri pointed towards the yet to be finished score and asked Mozart, “Is this everything?”. In that moment, Mozart responded, “No, the true flame remains.” and added another melody. Then the score came out to be imperishable throughout history. No matter what the piece of work is, an element that’s capable of blowing life into it is required, and without that you won’t be able to feel any vigor or atmosphere. I’d like to once again show appreciation to cocorip, who is always able to find ‘a melody’ through a beautiful method.

I'd like to give my thanks to the person who is always patiently waiting for the manuscript from the author, my mother..... is not the person, my editor is. This manuscript was especially late. The longer I take, the more hardship my editor goes through, so I can only apologize. The next manuscript..... in order to give you the next manuscript a bit faster.....I'll do my best.....!

The last person I wish to give my appreciation to is, of course, my readers.

Though it may be the beautiful angel who brings the verdict down on life, the verdict for <Dungeon Defense> volume 2 is completely in the hands of you readers. This establishes a metaphor that you readers are no different from angels to me. That is so. In truth, this afterword, from start to finish, is completely a figure of speech. Not only the body text, but the afterword is a story within a story as well. How profound this is! How baroque this is! While shedding tears, I can only plea to the angel to at least spare me from a burning hell.....

I hope that everyone was able to enjoy volume 2.

2016-03-21

In a room where the ground is still chilly

Yoo Heun Hwa